

# SALMONELLA FACT SHEET

## What is *Salmonella*?

*Salmonella* is a type of bacteria that lives in the digestive tract of humans and animals. There are various types of *Salmonella*. Salmonellosis, the illness caused by nontyphoidal *Salmonella*, primarily results in inflammation of the stomach and intestines (acute gastroenteritis). *Salmonella* is the second most common cause of illnesses associated with eating contaminated food. Typhoid fever, an illness caused by a different type of *Salmonella* is discussed in a separate fact sheet.

## Who can get Salmonellosis?

Anyone. However children, particularly those under the age of 5, are at the highest risk for infection. Salmonellosis is more common in the summer than the winter.

## What are the symptoms of Salmonellosis?

Symptoms of acute gastroenteritis due to infection with *Salmonella* can include the sudden onset of diarrhea (may be bloody), abdominal cramps, fever, and less frequently, nausea, vomiting and headache. The elderly and infants are at risk for severe dehydration. A small number of people with *Salmonella* develop pain in their joints. This is known as reactive arthritis.

## How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually appear within 12–36 hours after being infected but may take as long as 72 hours to appear.

## How does *Salmonella* spread?

Foods of animal origin, such as eggs and poultry, may be contaminated with *Salmonella*. You can become infected with *Salmonella* by consuming contaminated food or water. Contaminated foods usually look and smell normal. The bacteria are also spread by contact with infected animals and may be found in the feces of some animals. You can become infected if you do not wash

your hands after contact with animals or animal feces, or the area where an infected animal lives (such as the cage or tank water). Many animals can carry *Salmonella*, but appear perfectly healthy. Reptiles (such as turtles, lizards, and snakes) and poultry (such as chicks and ducks) are commonly infected with *Salmonella*.

## How is Salmonellosis treated?

Most people with salmonellosis will recover in 4–7 days without any specific treatment other than adequate fluids to prevent dehydration. Hospitalization or treatment with antibiotics may be required for persons with severe illness.

## How can a person protect themselves against Salmonellosis?

The following steps can protect you against salmonellosis:

- Cook poultry, ground beef, and eggs thoroughly
- Refrigerate cooked foods within 2 hours
- Refrigerate foods at a safe temperature (between 32°F and 40°F)
- Do not eat or drink foods containing raw eggs, or raw (unpasteurized) milk.
- Wash hands, cutting boards and other kitchen work surfaces, and utensils with soap and water immediately after they have been in contact with raw meat or poultry to prevent cross-contamination
- Wash raw fruit and vegetables thoroughly before eating
- Wash hands with soap and water after handling reptiles, birds, or baby chicks, pet food or pet feces

## Where can I get more information?

Information about *Salmonella* and other related health topics can be found at the website [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov). The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please visit [www.doh.dc.gov](http://www.doh.dc.gov) or call (202) 442-9371.