

# PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET



HEALTH DIVISION

Department of Health & Human Services

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## Salmonella

### What is Salmonella?

Salmonella is bacteria that gets into the intestines and causes illness. These bacteria can be found in raw eggs, raw (unpasteurized) milk, meat, poultry (chicken, turkey, chicks) and on pet reptiles such as turtles, snakes, iguanas and alligators.

### What are the symptoms of Salmonella?

Often a person with Salmonella will have these signs/symptoms:

- headache
- nausea and vomiting
- stomach ache
- fever
- diarrhea (three or more loose bowel movements in 24 hours).

Sometimes a person may have the Salmonella bacteria but not feel sick.

### How is Salmonella spread?

Salmonella is spread to people by eating food with bacteria in it or by people who don't wash their hands after going to the bathroom, changing diapers or working with raw eggs/poultry.

If you have Salmonella you can give the disease to others. You must wash your hands:

- after using the bathroom
- after changing diapers
- before and after making food
- before eating
- after playing with pets

Young children have a greater chance of getting this disease because they have not yet learned to wash their hands properly.

### What should I do if I have these symptoms?

It's hard to tell if diarrhea and other signs are caused by Salmonella. The only way to find out is to see a doctor. You may be asked to bring a sample of your stool (bowel movement). The doctor may also need a sample of blood. The diarrhea usually goes away by itself; medicine is given only in rare situations. The doctor may need more stool samples to make sure bacteria are gone. Be sure to follow the doctor's instructions carefully if you are given medicine. If you have diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, and stomach aches, you will want to avoid big meals of solid foods. Instead, you should eat things like Jell-O, clear broth, tea, and clear juices until symptoms go away. Other family members may need to be checked.

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## How can Salmonella be prevented?

- If your child has Salmonella your doctor may tell you to keep your child away from other children until the stool sample does not have the bacteria.
- Infected food service, patient care, or day care workers should be off work until they are no longer infected.
- Wash all clothing, sheets, and diapers soiled by a person who has Salmonella in hot soapy water. Dry these items in clothes dryer.
- Wrap disposable dirty diapers so that they are completely covered. Put them in a plastic bag and then in garbage can with a tight lid. Wash your hands after handling soiled diapers.
- Children's toys and the floors they crawl on should be kept clean to avoid spreading Salmonella. Wash hard surfaces, toys and play surfaces with hot soapy water, rinse with hot water, and disinfect with bleach and water solution: Use a freshly prepared 1:100 dilution of common household bleach; approximately 2 teaspoons per 1 quart (4 cups) of water. Apply bleach solution and let air dry.
- Do not eat raw eggs or raw (unpasteurized) milk. Throw away cracked eggs because they may have the bacteria in them.
- Cook meat well before eating it. Put cooked meat into the refrigerator right after a meal. Don't leave it on the counter to cool off. Salmonella may grow in meat that remains on the counter.
- Scrub cutting boards, counters, and utensils with hot soapy water after contact with raw or cooked meat, poultry or eggs.
- Wash your hands and your children's hands after using the bathroom, after changing diapers, before eating, before and after making food, and after playing with animals.
- Children should not handle baby chicks or other young birds.
- Reptiles are not appropriate pets for small children and should not be in the same house as an infant.

## Are there complications?

Sometimes Salmonella can cause other infections which can lead to serious illness. In some cases the diarrhea and vomiting can cause the body to lose a lot of fluids. This dehydration (loss of water) can be a problem for small children and infants or for the elderly. It is important for people to drink lots of fluids while ill.

**For more information on Salmonella, call (248) 858-1406 or toll free 1 (800) 848-5533.**

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