

Salmonellosis Fact Sheet

What is Salmonellosis?

Foodborne illness can be caused when contaminated water or food is eaten. Salmonellosis is an infection from bacteria called *Salmonella*. There are many different strains (serotypes) of *Salmonella* bacteria, but the type that causes salmonellosis are referred to as nontyphoidal *Salmonella* (NTS). *Salmonella* live in the intestines of people and animals, including livestock, poultry and other birds, and some pets.

What are the symptoms of salmonellosis infection?

Most individuals infected with *Salmonella* develop nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, headache, and stomach cramps 12 to 72 hours after exposure. The illness usually lasts 4 to 7 days. While most persons recover without treatment, some people get severe dehydration and electrolyte imbalance that may require hospitalization. *Salmonella* can spread to other organs and cause very serious illness. Young children, the elderly, and people with weak immune systems are at especially high risk for the illness to progress to a more severe illness.

How is salmonellosis spread?

Contaminated food:

Most types of *Salmonella* are spread when people eat foods contaminated with stool from infected animals or humans. This can include food contaminated by the hands of an infected food handler who does not properly wash his or her hands after using the restroom. Also preparing food or drinking water contaminated with NTS.

Many kinds of food can become contaminated with *Salmonella* including:

- raw poultry and unpasteurized eggs,
- raw meats,
- produce exposed to untreated or sewage-contaminated water, such as tomatoes, peppers and cantaloupes,
- unpasteurized milk or dairy products, and
- dry foods, like spices and raw tree nuts.

Cross contamination:

Salmonella can be spread from a contaminated food or surface to other foods or objects in the environment. An example of cross contamination is preparing raw chicken on a cutting board and then using the same cutting board to prepare lettuce without adequately cleaning and sanitizing between uses. Food can also be cross contaminated if it is not stored properly. For example, improperly stored raw chicken can touch or drip onto ready-to-eat foods.

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Pets:

Salmonella may also be spread if people do not wash their hands after contact with pets or pet stool, and before handling or eating food. Baby chicks, ducklings, and most reptiles, such as turtles, frogs, lizards, and snakes, are frequently infected with *Salmonella*.

Why is salmonellosis important for child nutrition professionals?

People working with food who are sick with *Salmonella* can easily make others ill. A sick child nutrition employee can contaminate the food he or she is handling. Those eating the contaminated food may become ill. Following the key food safety practices below can prevent an outbreak of salmonellosis. If any of these practices are neglected, contaminated food may be served and many people may become very ill. It is important to always follow standard procedures for purchasing, storing, preparing, cooking, and serving food.

How can salmonellosis be prevented?

We can prevent this illness by following these guidelines:

- Wash your hands thoroughly after using the restroom or changing diapers, before preparing or eating food, and between handling different food items.
- Wash your hands after contact with animals or their environments (at farms, petting zoos, fairs, even your own yard).
- Avoid bare hand contact with ready-to-eat and ready-to-serve foods.
- Report symptoms of diarrhea and vomiting, diagnosis of salmonellosis to your manager and/or director. Do not work when you have these symptoms.
- Wash, rinse, and sanitize all food contact surfaces, using potable (clean) water, before use and between uses.
- Wash raw fruits and vegetables under clean, running water.
- Ensure all foods are purchased from a safe supplier. Purchase only pasteurized dairy products.
- Store foods properly keeping raw meat and poultry separated from ready-to-eat foods. Always store raw meat and poultry in the bottom shelf.
- Keep raw meat and poultry separate from food that will not be cooked to the same temperature, and ready-to-eat foods.
- Cook poultry, meat, and eggs thoroughly, and use a thermometer to test for proper temperature.

This fact sheet is part of a series of six fact sheets on foodborne illness control and prevention.



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