

Salmonellosis

What is salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is a bacterial infection that can affect the intestinal tract or occasionally the bloodstream. It is one of the more common causes of gastroenteritis. Bloodstream infections can be quite serious, mostly in the very young or the elderly. Infection can occur anytime throughout the year. Cases may occur alone or as part of a cluster or outbreak.

Who gets salmonellosis?

Any person can get salmonellosis, but it is recognized more often in infants and children.

How do you get salmonellosis?

Salmonella bacteria can be found throughout the food chain and the environment. The bacteria often contaminate raw meats, eggs, unpasteurized milk and cheese products. Other sources of infection may include pets (cats, dogs, turtles, iguanas) or farm and wild animals. People become infected by eating or drinking contaminated food, water or raw milk or by contact with the poop of an infected person or animal.

What are the symptoms of salmonellosis?

Not everyone who gets infected with the salmonella bacteria develops symptoms. Even persons without symptoms can pass the bacteria in their poop. If proper hand washing after bowel movements is not done, an infected person may contaminate food or drinks prepared for other people.

Symptoms usually include diarrhea, fever, headache, stomachache, nausea and sometimes vomiting. It usually takes 1-3 days for symptoms to appear, but symptoms may appear as soon as 6 hours after exposure.

How long can an infected person carry the salmonella germ?

It is difficult to say how long any given person may get rid of the bacteria in their poop. The carrier stage varies from several days to many months. Infants and people who have been treated with oral antibiotics tend to carry the bacteria longer than others.

What is the treatment for salmonellosis?

Most people with salmonellosis will recover on their own. However, some may require

fluids given intravenously to prevent dehydration. Antibiotics and antidiarrhea drugs generally are not recommended for persons with intestinal infections.

Do infected persons need to be isolated or excluded from work or school?

Since salmonella bacteria are in the poop, only people with active diarrhea who are unable to control their bowel habits (for example, infants, young children, certain disabled individuals) should be isolated. Most infected persons may return to work or school when the diarrhea has stopped, provided they carefully wash their hands after using the toilet. However, some persons must obtain the approval of the Kansas City Health Department before returning to work. The approval process requires testing to show that the bacteria no longer are present in the poop. The Health Department makes the decision on who needs approval based on individual circumstances, for example, food handlers, day care center staff, etc.

How can salmonellosis be prevented?

Wash your hands with soap and hot water for at least 30 seconds after using the toilet and before and after preparing food. Use of an antibacterial soap is preferable, but it does not shorten the time you need to scrub to remove the bacteria.

Always treat raw poultry, beef and pork as if they are contaminated. Wrap fresh meats in plastic bags at the market to prevent blood from dripping onto other foods. Refrigerate meats promptly and minimize the time kept at room temperature. Cutting boards and counters used for preparation of the meat should be washed immediately after use to prevent cross contamination of other foods. Avoid eating raw or undercooked meats and ensure that the correct internal cooking temperature (165°F) is reached, particularly when using a microwave.

- avoid eating raw eggs or consuming undercooked foods that contain raw eggs
- avoid using raw milk
- wash hands after handling pets

As reptiles are popular pets, their importance as a source of salmonellosis is increasing. Therefore, the following people should avoid all contact, direct or indirect, with any reptile as the risks of serious salmonellosis are greatly increased:

- infants and children up to 5 years of age
- anyone with HIV/AIDS or other immunodeficiency disease
- anyone who has had transplant surgery and is on anti-rejection therapy
- anyone who is on any drug that suppresses/alters immune function including: steroids, cancer chemotherapy, biological response modifiers and others
- anyone receiving radiation therapy
- due to the risk to the fetus, women who are pregnant

- elderly people

Reptiles should be kept out of kitchens and away from any surfaces where human food is stored, prepared or served. Sinks, shower stalls and bathtubs should not be used to bathe reptiles or clean their cages and equipment. In addition, reptiles should not be kept in any day care center.