



## SALMONELLOSIS

### WHAT IS SALMONELLOSIS?

- Salmonellosis is an infection of the digestive tract, caused by a group of bacteria called *Salmonella*.
- Salmonella bacteria are found in the gut of humans and many wild and domestic animals such as birds, mammals and reptiles.
- In Australia, most Salmonella infection occur after eating contaminated food or after contact with another infected person or animal.
- Some people can get very sick ill from Salmonellosis, especially young children and older people.
- If you have symptoms or suspect you may be carrying the infection, it's important to stay at home from work, school or day care until at least 48 hours after symptoms stop.

### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF SALMONELLOSIS?

Symptoms include:

- headache
- fever
- stomach cramps
- diarrhoea
- nausea
- vomiting
- blood or mucus in stools (poo)
- loss of appetite

Symptoms usually start 6-72 hours after exposure to the bacteria and usually last for 4-7 days but can sometimes last much longer.

### HOW IS SALMONELLOSIS SPREAD?

You can get Salmonellosis from:

- Consuming contaminated, undercooked meat (most commonly chicken and other poultry products)
- Eating contaminated raw or undercooked eggs
- Eating pre-prepared or ready to eat foods that has been cross contaminated with Salmonella from raw foods or from using contaminated kitchen utensils such as knives or cutting boards.
- Handling raw meat and pet meat
- Handling animals, particularly chickens, other birds, tropical fish and reptiles
- Drinking water that has been contaminated by animals or sewage material
- People who may have Salmonella can also pass the bacteria out of their body in their faeces (poo).
- If you then eat food, drink water or touch things contaminated with bacteria from infected people you can be infected too.

### WHO IS AT RISK OF GETTING SALMONELLOSIS?

Anyone can get Salmonella. However, the following people are at higher risk of severe illness:

- Babies and children under 5 years of age
- People aged 65 years and older
- People with weakened immune systems or with other medical conditions
- Pregnant women



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### HOW CAN I AVOID GETTING SALMONELLOSIS?

Practicing the following precautions will reduce the risk of Salmonellosis to you and others:

- **Cooking:** Cook minced meat, sausages, hamburgers, rolled roasts and poultry thoroughly until the juices run clear and there are no pink areas inside. Whole cuts of beef or lamb, such as steaks, are less likely to be contaminated within the meat so can be served rare (pink inside) if requested.
- **Handwashing:** Thoroughly wash your hands with soap and warm water after going to the toilet, changing nappies, before handling and eating food, after handling raw food (especially raw poultry), after gardening and after contact with pets and other animals. It is especially important to particularly clean under the fingernails and between fingers.
- **Temperature control:** Not storing food properly can allow the bacteria to grow. The longer you leave food at room temperature the more Salmonella can multiply.
  - Keep cold food below 5°C and hot food above 60°C.
  - foods should be quickly reheated until all parts of the food are steaming hot
  - thaw frozen foods in a fridge or microwave.

#### Food handling and contamination:

- Do not wash raw chicken meat.
- Thoroughly wash raw fruit and vegetables before eating.
- Do not drink unpasteurised milk and its products.
- Discard cracked or dirty eggs.
- Don't serve foods containing raw eggs to children less than 2 years of age, pregnant women, people over 65 years of age and those with serious illness. To minimise risk, cook eggs until the white is completely firm and yolks begin to thicken.
- Store raw meat in sealed containers in the bottom of the fridge or freezer to prevent any fluid dripping or spilling onto other ready-to eat food. Cover all foods in the refrigerator and freezer to protect them from contamination.
- Use different chopping boards, trays, utensils and plates when preparing raw foods and ready to eat food. If you have only one chopping board wash it well in hot soapy water before reuse
- Dry dishes with a different cloth to that used for wiping hands or bench tops; wash dish cloths regularly
- People experiencing gastrointestinal symptoms should not handle or serve food, care for the elderly or children until 2 days after the symptoms have stopped.

#### Safe drinking water:

- Avoid drinking water that has not been treated (including water from lakes, rivers or streams) or from areas where you don't know the quality of source water
- If you must drink untreated water from a roof, river or lake (e.g., in a rural area), it should be boiled for 1 minute or treated before consumption.



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### HOW IS SALMONELLOSIS DIAGNOSED AND TREATED?

- Most people recover within a week with rest and drinking plenty of fluids such as water.
- Sometimes admission to hospital is required to treat dehydration.
- Antibiotics are not usually given as they can make the illness worse but are sometimes recommended in complicated cases or for young children or the elderly.

You should contact your doctor if:

- Symptoms last longer than a few days
- Diarrhoea is severe or bloody
- You are at risk for severe Salmonella (young children, older people, and people with poor immune systems)

Your doctor may request a faeces (poo) sample for testing as it's the only way to confirm if you have Salmonellosis or not.

### WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I GET SALMONELLOSIS / WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE?

- Laboratories and Medical Practitioners are required to notify Salmonella infections in Victoria.
- The Gippsland Region Public Health Unit will be notified of cases within Gippsland catchment, and will investigate cases, clusters and outbreaks to try to identify common exposures.
- Where a common food is implicated, a further environmental investigation to initiate safety control measures and prevent further spread will be undertaken.

### Additional information:

[Gastroenteritis - salmonellosis - Better Health Channel](#)

[Salmonella | healthdirect](#)

