

# FactSheet

Para Su Información

## Salmonellosis

### What is salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is an infection of the gastrointestinal system caused by Salmonella bacteria. Most people infected with Salmonella develop diarrhea, fever and abdominal cramps 12 to 72 hours after being exposed to the bacteria. The illness usually lasts four to seven days and most people recover without treatment. Some people develop diarrhea so severe that hospitalization is required. Not all people infected with Salmonella will become sick but asymptomatic people may excrete the bacteria and become a source of infection for others.

### How is Salmonella transmitted?

Salmonella bacteria live in the intestinal tracts of humans and animals, including birds and reptiles. Salmonella bacteria are usually transmitted to humans by eating foods contaminated with animal feces. Contaminated foods usually look and smell normal.

Contaminated foods are often of animal origin (beef, poultry, milk, unpasteurized dairy products or eggs) but all foods, including fruits and vegetables may become contaminated. Cooking food thoroughly kills Salmonella. Food may also become contaminated by the hands of an infected person who does not properly wash his or her hands with soap after using the bathroom.

Salmonella may also be found in the feces of some pets, especially those with diarrhea, and people can become infected if they do not wash their hands after contact with these animals. Reptiles are particularly likely to harbor Salmonella and people should always wash their hands immediately after handling a reptile, even if the reptile is healthy. Reptiles (including turtles) are not appropriate pets for small

children and should not be in the same house as an infant.

### Should people with salmonellosis be excluded from work or school?

An infected person may spread salmonellosis for several days to months. People with diarrhea should not attend childcare/school or go to work. Most infected people may return to work/school when their diarrhea stops if they properly wash their hands after using the toilet. Food handlers and childcare workers must be excluded from work until they have submitted two consecutive stool specimens that are negative for Salmonella bacteria.

### How can salmonellosis be prevented?

There is no vaccine to prevent salmonellosis. Since foods of animal origin may be contaminated with Salmonella, people should not eat raw or undercooked eggs, poultry or meat. Raw eggs may be used in foods such as homemade hollandaise sauce, Caesar and other homemade salad dressings, tiramisu, homemade ice cream, homemade mayonnaise, cookie dough and frostings. Poultry and meat, including hamburgers, should be well-cooked, not pink in the middle. People also should not consume unpasteurized (raw) milk or other dairy products. Fruits and vegetables should be thoroughly washed before consuming.

Cross-contamination of foods should be avoided. Uncooked meats should be kept separate from fruit, vegetables, cooked foods, and ready-to-eat foods. Hands, cutting boards, counters, knives, and other utensils should be washed thoroughly after handling uncooked foods. Hands should be washed before

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handling any food, and between handling different food items.

People who have salmonellosis should not prepare/serve food or beverages for others until they have been shown to no longer be carrying Salmonella bacteria.

Always wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food, using the toilet, after changing diapers, and after playing with pets.

### **Where can I get more information?**

Contact your doctor or the Southern Nevada Health District, Office of Epidemiology at (702) 759-1300.



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