



Hawaii State Department of Health

Disease Investigation Branch

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Salmonellosis

What is salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is an infection of the gut caused by *Salmonella* bacteria. These bacteria are a frequent cause of food poisoning. *Salmonella* has also been used as a bioterrorist weapon.

How do you get it?

You get salmonellosis by eating or drinking food or water contaminated with human or animal feces containing the bacteria. You can also get it if you put your hands to your mouth after touching *Salmonella*-carrying animals (including turtles, chicks, dogs, cats and rodents). Foods that are often connected to *Salmonella* food poisoning include eggs, poultry, beef, pork, and unpasteurized dairy products, but any food contaminated with the bacteria can be a source of infection.

Additionally, salmonellosis is spread from person-to-person by fecal-oral contact that can occur when taking care of or eating foods prepared by someone with diarrhea caused by *Salmonella*. Some people may be infected with *Salmonella* and can spread it to others without showing any symptoms of illness.

What are the symptoms of salmonellosis?

The symptoms include sudden onset of diarrhea, headache, stomach pain, low-grade fever, and sometimes vomiting. The diarrhea and loss of appetite often last for several days or weeks after most of the other symptoms have faded.

When do symptoms start?

The symptoms usually start 12 to 36 hours after infection with the bacteria, but the onset can vary from 6 to 72 hours.

What is the treatment for salmonellosis?

Fluid and electrolyte replacement is most important. Most persons with salmonellosis will recover without treatment. However, a doctor can prescribe medicines to treat severe cases of the disease. A doctor should evaluate infants, the elderly, and those with other medical problems.

Should a person with salmonellosis go to work or school?

Students with diarrhea should stay home from school until the diarrhea stops. Food handlers, day care workers, and health care workers should not return to work until they have their doctor's permission, usually after two lab tests showing they are no longer infected.

How can you keep from getting it?

Wash your hands thoroughly after using the toilet, after changing diapers, after handling pets, and especially before preparing or eating food.

Do not drink untreated water (ponds, streams, rivers).

Do not drink unpasteurized (raw) milk or eat raw or undercooked meat, and refrigerate foods promptly after purchase.

Do not eat raw eggs or foods containing raw eggs.

Always treat raw poultry, beef, and pork as if they were contaminated. Keep food that will be eaten raw, such as vegetables, from becoming contaminated by animal products. Do not lick your fingers, touch other foods, or smoke a cigarette before washing your hands after handling raw meat.

Wash cutting boards thoroughly after contact with each food, so that the boards do not contaminate the next food prepared.

Cook poultry and meats to an even inner temperature (usually 165°F or higher), especially when using a microwave. Check food temperatures with a thermometer.

Avoid letting infants or young children touch reptiles, such as turtles or iguanas.

Avoid sexual practices that may permit fecal-oral transmission.

For more information, see the CDC's website at

http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/dfbmd/disease_listing/salmonellosis_gi.html