



Salmonella Infection (Salmonellosis)

What is salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is a food borne infection caused by salmonella bacteria. Typical symptoms include the sudden onset of stomach pain accompanied by headache, diarrhea, fever, loss of appetite, nausea and sometimes vomiting. Dehydration, especially among infants and the elderly, may be severe. Although deaths are usually uncommon, the infection is more dangerous when it occurs in young children, the elderly or the debilitated. Symptoms begin six to 72 hours (usually 12 to 36 hours) after ingestion of the bacteria and illness may last anywhere from several days to several weeks.

How is salmonellosis spread?

The salmonella bacteria are found in the feces of wild and domestic animals, particularly fowl, swine, cattle, turtles, dogs, cats and rodents. They may be found in certain foods such as unpasteurized (raw) milk, raw eggs and uncooked poultry (chicken), meats or contaminated water. Infected humans can be a source of the infection.

Illness usually occurs after a person eats or drinks foods contaminated with salmonella bacteria. Also, the bacteria can spread from one food product to another. This happens if utensils (knives, forks) or counter tops used to prepare contaminated foods are re-used without proper cleaning and sanitizing.

People may be infected if they handle contaminated pets, animals or foods and don't thoroughly wash their hands afterwards.

Certain conditions make it easy for the bacteria to grow. One of the most common problems is storing certain foods (chicken, eggs) at room (too warm) temperatures between 5°C and 60°C which is considered the danger zone.

The undercooking of meats allows the bacteria to survive and multiply again.

How is Salmonellosis prevented?

Thorough hand washing is the best

- prevention. Make sure hands are properly washed after using the toilet, diapering, handling pets or before preparing foods.

- Clean and sanitize counter tops and utensils immediately after the preparation of foods, particularly meats and poultry.
- If possible, have separate cutting boards for raw and cooked meats.
- Drink only pasteurized milk.
- Store and serve foods below danger zone temperatures. (5°C - 60°C).
- Make sure dairy products, meats and poultry are properly refrigerated at 5°C or lower.
- Avoid using raw eggs, as in egg nog or homemade ice cream, and never use dirty or cracked eggs.
- If sick with diarrhea, don't prepare or handle food.
- Keep in mind that turtles, chicks, ducks, lizards and snakes may be salmonella carriers, and are not suitable pets for children.

Salmonellosis must be reported to the Medical Officer of Health as required by the Health Promotion and Protection Act.

Recommended Absence

Persons who are food handlers, persons who work in hospitals and other institutions where people live, or persons who attend day care centres should be absent while symptoms are present.



For more information, please contact a member of Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit's Communicable Disease Team.

Updated March 2022

