

# Salmonellosis

## Community and Public Health

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Salmonellosis is an infection of the bowel caused by *Salmonella* bacteria. It is usually caught from eating contaminated or poorly handled food.

Other sources are infected household pets, farm animals, or an infected person who handles food.

### What are the symptoms?

Diarrhoea, vomiting, abdominal pain, headache and fever usually occur 6 to 72 hours after swallowing the bacteria. These symptoms usually last 3 to 5 days.

Infants should be taken to a doctor if any of the following occur:

- their symptoms don't settle;
- they aren't taking enough fluids;
- they may be getting dehydrated.

### How is it treated?

Usually extra fluid and rest are recommended. However a doctor should always be consulted if symptoms are severe and may give further treatment.

### How is it spread?

People become infected when they swallow the bacteria. This can happen:

- When handling food, especially un-cooked chicken, meat or un-pasteurised milk.
- When eating undercooked meat, including poultry.
- When drinking from an untreated water supply (such as tank or bore water).
- From contact with infected animals, especially puppies and kittens with diarrhoea, tropical fish and reptiles.
- From contact with the manure from farm animals.
- From contact with infected people, including children and babies.

Duck eggs may contain salmonella and should always be thoroughly cooked before eaten.

### How can spread be prevented?

There are a few things you can do to avoid getting infected or passing the illness on to others.

#### *Washing hands*

Wash your hands thoroughly by using plenty of soap, cleaning under fingernails, rinsing hands well and thoroughly drying on a clean dry towel for at least 20 seconds:

- before and after preparing food;
- after going to the toilet or changing a baby's nappy; and
- after caring for people with salmonellosis.

Poo should be cleaned up using first a detergent solution then a solution of household chlorine bleach.

#### *Preparing and cooking food safely*

- Don't handle food until you are free of all symptoms for at least 48 hours.
- Thaw meat in the fridge - not at room temperature.
- Separate raw meat from other foods. Keep them in the bottom of the fridge to prevent them dripping onto other foods.
- Use separate chopping boards when preparing cooked and raw foods (especially meat and poultry).
- Thoroughly clean knives, cutting boards and other surfaces immediately after contact with raw meat.
- Cook food thoroughly especially meat and poultry.

### Taking time off work or school

Infected people should stay away from work, school or preschool while they are unwell. Most people can return once they have been free of symptoms for 2 days. This includes healthcare or childcare workers, and children attending early childhood services. You should stay away again if symptoms return.

Some people need to check with their doctor or Community and Public Health before returning to work, school or day care— such food handlers.

Information adapted from Auckland Regional Public Health Service resource (Accessed August 2017).