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Salmonellosis

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What is Salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is caused by infection with bacteria called *Salmonella*. In Australia, most *Salmonella* infections occur after eating contaminated food or sometimes after contact with another person with the infection.

What are the symptoms?

People infected with *Salmonella* commonly develop headache, fever, stomach cramps, diarrhoea, nausea, and vomiting. Symptoms often start 6-72 hours after infection. Symptoms usually last for 4-7 days, sometimes much longer.

How is it spread?

Salmonella is mainly spread to humans when they eat poorly cooked food made from infected animals (that is, meat, poultry, eggs, and their by-products). Spread by 'cross-contamination' occurs when *Salmonella* contaminates ready-to-eat food: for example, when food that will not be cooked further is cut with a contaminated knife or via the hands of an infected food handler. *Salmonella* can spread from person-to-person via the hands of an infected person. It can also be spread from animals to humans.

Who is at risk?

Anyone can get salmonellosis. Infants, the elderly, and people with poor immune systems, are more likely to have a severe illness.

How is it prevented?

Cooking

Thorough cooking of food kills *Salmonella*. Avoid raw or undercooked meat, poultry, or eggs. Poultry and meat - such as hamburgers, sausages, and rolled roasts - should not be eaten if pink in the middle.

Food handling

Because *Salmonella* can be carried on the hands, it is very important to always wash hands thoroughly after using the toilet and before preparing food. Hands should be washed with soap and water for at least 10 seconds, rinsed, and dried well.

Particular attention should be given to the area under the fingernails and between fingers. Infected food handlers can shed large numbers of *Salmonella*. They should not handle or serve food until the diarrhoea has stopped and their stools test clear of *Salmonella*.

Temperature control

Poor food storage can allow *Salmonella* to grow. Refrigerated food should be kept at less than five degrees Celsius. Hot foods should be kept hot at above 60 degrees Celsius. Reheated foods should be quickly reheated until all parts of the food are steaming hot. Thawing frozen foods should be done in a fridge or microwave. The longer you leave food at room temperature the more *Salmonella* can multiply.

Food contamination

To prevent the contamination of food:

- store raw foods (such as 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
- wash hands immediately after going to the toilet or handling raw foods and before handling cooked or ready-to-eat food
- 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
- thoroughly wash all dirt off any raw vegetables and fruits before preparing and eating them
- dry dishes with a different cloth to that used for wiping hands or bench tops; wash dish cloths regularly

How is it diagnosed?

To diagnose it, your general practitioner or local hospital will send a stool sample to a laboratory for *Salmonella* testing.

How is it treated?

Most people recover with rest and fluids. Some people may require hospitalisation. Antibiotics are sometimes recommended in complicated cases.

What is the public health response?

Laboratories are required to notify cases of *Salmonella* infection to the local public health unit. The public health units investigate clusters of cases to try and identify common links. Where a common food is implicated the NSW Food Authority will undertake a further environmental investigation and initiate control measures. Statistics on cases are used to help develop prevention strategies.

The NSW Food Authority is responsible for a range of food safety strategies to prevent salmonellosis and other food borne infections.

Further information - Public Health Units in NSW

For more information please contact your doctor, local public health unit or community health centre - look under NSW Government at the front of the White Pages

Metropolitan Areas	Location	Number	Rural Areas	Location	Number
Northern Sydney/Central Coast	Hornsby	02 9477 9400	Greater Southern	Goulburn	02 4824 1837
	Gosford	02 4349 4845		Albury	02 6080 8900
South Eastern Sydney/Illawarra	Randwick	02 9382 8333	Greater Western	Broken Hill	08 8080 1499
	Wollongong	02 4221 6700		Dubbo	02 6841 5569
Sydney South West	Camperdown	02 9515 9420		Bathurst	02 6339 5601
Sydney West	Penrith	02 4734 2022	Hunter/New England	Newcastle	02 4924 6477
	Parramatta	02 9840 3603		Tamworth	02 6767 8630
Justice Health Service	Matraville	02 9311 2707	North Coast	Port Macquarie	02 6588 2750
				Lismore	02 6620 7500

See full details of Public Health Units at

www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/infectious/phus.asp