

SALMONELLOSIS



What is salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is caused by the Salmonella group of bacteria. It is commonly associated with outbreaks in institutions and with social functions. Symptoms include diarrhoea, nausea, abdominal pain, fever, muscle pain and headache. Illness usually lasts up to one week. Pregnant women, newborn babies, the elderly, people with chronic diseases or compromised immune systems are most at risk of serious infection.

Which groups are affected?

Salmonella infection is the second most commonly reported cause of infectious intestinal disease in the UK. It affects all age groups. Infants and young children, the immunosuppressed, the debilitated and people on broad-spectrum antibiotics are at greatest risk of infection.

How do you catch it?

Salmonellosis is caught by eating contaminated food. Infection is associated with the consumption of poultry, especially chicken and eggs, although beef, pork, lamb and milk can also be affected. The consumption of raw or undercooked meat or meat products, poultry or poultry products and eggs; unpasteurized milk and dairy products can lead to infection. Person-to-person spread also occurs, particularly within families and institutions. Pets can pass on the infection. Consumption of contaminated untreated water can also cause infection.

How is it diagnosed?

It is diagnosed by examination and culture of a stool or blood sample.

Is there any treatment?

Most people recover without any specific treatment. Extra fluids are important, especially if you have diarrhoea or vomiting. This is particularly critical for babies, children, pregnant women and the elderly. Contact your general practitioner if you are worried about your condition, you may be eligible for antibiotic therapy.

How is further spread prevented?

Salmonellosis is notifiable, which means that your doctor is legally obliged to inform the Environmental Health Department of your case. An Environmental Health Officer or the Consultant of Communicable Disease Control may contact or visit you to identify the source of contamination and help you prevent further spread of infection.

What about going to work/school?

The following groups should remain at home until 48 hours after the symptoms have stopped:

- ◆ people working in the food and catering business.
- ◆ staff of healthcare facilities, particularly those looking after or serving food to infants, the elderly or the debilitated.
- ◆ children aged less than five years old who attend nurseries or playgroups.
- ◆ older children or adults who find it difficult to implement good standards of personal hygiene eg. those with learning disabilities or special needs, or in situations where hygienic arrangements are unreliable.

How can it be prevented?

- ◆ Hand washing is the most important part of infection control. Wash hands thoroughly with hot soapy water before eating or preparing food, after handling raw foods, after using or cleaning the toilet, changing a nappy, handling soiled items, attending to a patient, having contact with animals or the soil. Dry your hands thoroughly.
- ◆ Keep raw meat and poultry separate from cooked and ready-to-eat foods at all times. Never store raw food above cooked food in the fridge.
- ◆ Wash utensils, chopping boards, dishes, and surfaces thoroughly with a disinfectant such as dettol or bleach, after preparing raw foods or eggs and before dealing with other foods to avoid cross-contamination.
- ◆ Cook eggs until the yolk and white are firm. Do not use cracked or dirty eggs. Eat eggs promptly once cooked. Avoid foods that include raw or partially cooked eggs, such as homemade mayonnaise, mousse and tiramisu.
- ◆ Eat cooked food immediately or refrigerate/freeze within 90 minutes of cooking it, reheat thoroughly before eating.

- ◆ Defrost frozen food thoroughly on a plate either in the refrigerator, the microwave or under cold running water, but not on the counter. Cook food immediately after defrosting
- ◆ Store eggs and in the fridge and eat within three weeks of purchase.
- ◆ Meat and poultry should be well cooked. Cook poultry until the juices run clear and it is white in the middle. Cook meat until it is brown on the inside. Be careful at barbecues.
- ◆ Avoid unpasteurized milk or milk products; this includes dried milk.
- ◆ Reptiles, including turtles, are not suitable pets for young children and should not be in a house with an infant.
- ◆ Be particularly careful when travelling abroad to countries where sanitation is poor. Select foods that are cooked and served hot. Avoid raw fruit and vegetables that have not been cooked or peeled, such as salads.

Where can I get more information?

Talk to your general practitioner (GP) or for further information or to raise a question please access www.birmingham.gov.uk or telephone 0121 303 6007.

How can I prevent giving this infection to someone else?

- ◆ Don't prepare or handle food for other people until you have been symptom-free for 48 hours.
- ◆ If cleaning up diarrhoea or vomit, wash the surface with hot soapy water, before rinsing and allowing to dry. Paper towels or disposable cloths should be used for cleaning.
- ◆ Clean toilet bowls and seats, flush handles, door handles and taps at least daily with a household cleaner before rinsing and allowing to dry. Use disposable cloths.
- ◆ Soiled clothing and bedding should be washed on a hot cycle. Articles that are heavily soiled can be soaked beforehand in a disinfectant. After loading the washing machine wipe the outer surface with a disinfectant.
- ◆ Wear rubber gloves when cleaning the toilet, cleaning up vomit or diarrhoea and loading the washing machine with soiled clothing.
- ◆ Do not share any towels, including hand towels, with other members of the family.