



## Salmonella Fact Sheet

### **What is Salmonella?**

Salmonella is a common bacterial infection of the gut. Several hundred people develop this disease in Oklahoma each year, mostly in the summer months.

### **Who gets Salmonella?**

Anyone can get Salmonella, but it is recognized more often in the elderly, infants, children and those with underlying severe medical problems.

### **How are Salmonella bacteria spread?**

Salmonella bacteria are spread by eating or drinking infected food or water. They are also spread by direct contact with infected people or animals.

### **What are the symptoms of Salmonella infection?**

People infected with Salmonella may have mild or severe diarrhea, fever, and sometimes vomiting. Blood infections can be very serious, especially in the very young or very old. Typhoid fever is the most severe type of Salmonella infection.

### **How soon after infection with Salmonella do symptoms appear?**

Diarrhea and fever usually occur 1 to 3 days after infection.

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### **Where are Salmonella found?**

Salmonella are found everywhere, but most often in raw meats, uncooked eggs, “raw” (unpasteurized) milk and cheese. Animals, such as turtles, frogs, lizards, baby chickens, ducks, dogs, and cats, can also carry Salmonella.

### **How long can an infected person carry Salmonella?**

An infected person can carry Salmonella for several days and possibly for many months. Infants and people treated with antibiotics may carry the bacteria longer than others.

### **Do infected people need to be excluded from work or school?**

Since Salmonella is found in the feces (stool), people with diarrhea (especially children in day care centers or people who handle food) should not go to school or work. Most infected people may return when their diarrhea stops if they carefully wash their hands after using the toilet and before handling food.

### **What is the treatment for Salmonella?**

Most people will recover on their own. Persons with severe diarrhea, especially small children and elderly people, should see a doctor.

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### How can Salmonella be prevented?

1. Always refrigerate meat.
2. Always cook meat completely, never eat raw meat.
3. Always cook eggs completely, never eat runny eggs.
4. Do not eat food that contains raw eggs, such as raw cookie dough or cake batter.
5. Avoid unpasteurized milk or foods made with unpasteurized milk.
6. Wash hands carefully before and after preparing food.
7. Always wash hands carefully with soap and water after using the toilet or handling dirty diapers.
8. Make sure children wash their hands with soap and warm water after handling pets.

*For further information, contact the  
Oklahoma City-County Health Department  
(405) 425-4437*

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