



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 children are at the highest risk. Young children, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems are the most likely to have severe infections

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, stomach cramps, and sometimes vomiting or headache.

How soon after infection with Salmonella do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually start within 6 hours - 4 days after infection and last 4-7 days.

Where are Salmonella found?

Salmonella are found everywhere, but most often in raw

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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 should not go to school or work. People who handle food, attend daycare centers, or are health care workers should be treated and have negative stool cultures before they return to work or the daycare center. The number of negative stool samples required depends on job duties. Most infected people may return after 24 hours of normal stools and 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 and should drink extra fluids as long as diarrhea lasts. Persons with severe diarrhea, especially small children and elderly people, should see a doctor. In rare cases, infection may spread

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from the intestines to the bloodstream. Antibiotics are typically used only to treat people in this situation and those with severe illness.

What is Typhoid Fever?

Typhoid fever is a life-threatening illness caused by the bacterium *Salmonella Typhi*. It only lives in humans and is not spread by animals. It is not common in the United States. If you plan to travel outside the U.S., you can get vaccinated and avoid getting sick from contaminated food and drinks.

How can Salmonella be prevented?

- Always refrigerate meat and cook meat completely
- Always cook eggs completely, never eat runny eggs
- Do not eat food that contains raw eggs, such as raw cookie dough or cake batter
- Avoid unpasteurized milk products
- Wash hands with soap and water carefully before and after preparing food and after using the toilet or handling dirty diapers
- 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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