

HEALTH BULLETIN

The ITCA Health Bulletin is written and distributed by the ITCA Epidemiology Center. The Bulletins address health topics of current interest, and are designed to educate and provide readers with information concerning actions that can be taken to help prevent the disease or condition from occurring.

May 2009

Volume 2 / Number 3

SALMONELLA

In recent years, reports of outbreaks of related cases of *Salmonella* infection occurring in a number of states have appeared in the national news. In each instance the outbreaks were caused by contaminated food from a common source that was sold in many states. These news stories were widely reported because it was important that people throughout the U.S. be warned of the risk of eating contaminated products. To help prevent the sickness caused by *Salmonella* infection, also known as salmonellosis, the answers to some frequently asked questions are provided below.

≡ FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is Salmonellosis or *Salmonella* Infection?

Salmonellosis is an infection with *Salmonella* bacteria that causes diarrhea in people. There are many different kinds of *Salmonella*. Infants, elders and people with weak immune systems are more likely to develop serious cases of salmonellosis, which require special medical care and sometimes hospitalization. Approximately 40,000 cases of salmonellosis are reported in the U.S. each year.

How Does *Salmonella* Spread?

Salmonella bacteria live in the intestines of people and many animals, including poultry, cattle, dogs, cats, turtles, snakes, and lizards. People can become infected with *Salmonella* by eating foods made from animal origins, foods contaminated with animal feces, or by not washing their hands after handling infected animals. Person-to-person fecal-oral transmission is possible in places that are not clean. Contaminated foods are hard to identify by appearance because they often look and smell normal. Thorough cooking kills *Salmonella* and makes the food safe to eat.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of *Salmonella* Infection?

Most people develop diarrhea, stomach cramps, nausea, fever, headache and sometimes vomiting within 12 to 72 hours after infection. The diarrhea can be severe. Illness usually lasts 4 to 7 days and most people recover completely. Severe dehydration can occur and the infection can sometimes spread to other parts of the body, such as the blood.

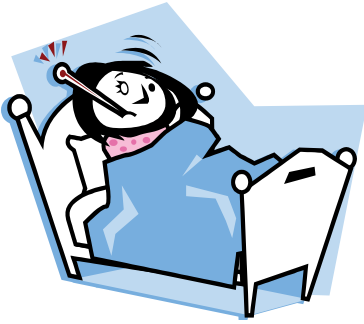
Is There Treatment for *Salmonella* Infection?

Oral rehydration is needed to replace lost fluids and electrolytes but most people get better without treatment or hospitalization. Severe diarrhea is often treated with intravenous fluids. Antibiotics are not usually needed unless the infection has spread beyond the intestines. There is no vaccine to prevent salmonellosis.

How Do I Know If I Have Salmonellosis?

There are many different causes of diarrhea. Only a laboratory test can determine if you have salmonellosis. A diagnosis of salmonellosis will be reported to the local health authorities by the laboratory and by your provider.

If You Think You Have *Salmonella* Infection:



- ☑ Go to the nearest IHS hospital or clinic, or your healthcare provider.
- ☑ Drink plenty of fluids and keep hydrated.
- ☑ Wash hands thoroughly every time after using the restroom.
- ☑ Avoid preparing food during this illness, if possible.
- ☑ Stay away from small children, elders, and people with weak immune systems when you have a *salmonella* infection.

Tips to Avoid *Salmonella* Infections



Avoid eating raw or undercooked eggs, poultry or meat, and foods made with raw eggs (e.g. Caesar salad dressing, Hollandaise sauce and cookie dough).

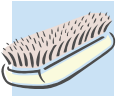


Wash your hands after contact with animal feces and after handling reptiles, baby chicks or any bird.



Buy fruits and vegetables that are not bruised or damaged (e.g. bruised tomatoes).

Only buy fresh cut produce (e.g. bagged salad, cut cantaloupe) that is refrigerated or surrounded by ice.



Scrub firm produce like melons and cucumbers with a clean brush before you cut them.



Keep fruits and vegetables that will be eaten raw separate from raw meat, poultry and seafood and from kitchen utensils used for those foods.



Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and counter tops with hot water and soap when switching between different food items.



Do not eat or drink unpasteurized milk, dairy products or juice.

For more information:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/salmonella/typhimurium/> or 1-800-CDC-INFO

US Food and Drug Administration: <http://www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hottopics/salmonellatyph.html> or 1-888-SAFEFOOD



Epidemiology Center
Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, Inc.
2214 N. Central Avenue, Suite 100 • Phoenix, Arizona 85004
Telephone: (602) 258-4822 • Fax: (602) 258-4825
www.itcaonline.com/epi

