

INFECTIOUS DISEASES *facts*

Salmonellosis – Facts

What is salmonellosis?

Salmonella is one of the main causes of foodborne illness. Salmonella are bacteria that are commonly found in the intestine of livestock, fowl, cats, dogs, rodents, turtles, exotic pets and other animals.

What are the symptoms of salmonellosis?

Typical symptoms of salmonellosis include sudden onset of headache, abdominal pain, diarrhea, nausea and sometimes vomiting. Dehydration, especially among infants or in the elderly, may be severe. Fever is almost always present. Diarrhea often persists for several days.

How soon do symptoms appear?

From 6 to 72 hours, usually about 12 to 36 hours after ingestion of the bacteria.

How is salmonellosis diagnosed?

Isolation of salmonella organisms from cultures of stool and sometimes blood.

How is salmonellosis transmitted?

By ingesting salmonella in raw and undercooked eggs and egg products, raw milk and raw milk products, contaminated water, meat and meat products, poultry and poultry products. In addition, pet turtles, iguanas, chicks, infected puppies and kittens, farm animals or infected infants are potential sources of these bacteria. Fecal-oral transmission from person to person can also occur especially when diarrhea is present combined with poor hygiene and lack of adequate handwashing.

What is the treatment for salmonellosis?

Consulting your physician or health care provider is recommended who may suggest symptomatic treatment, such as fluid replacement to prevent dehydration and possibly antibiotics. To prevent transmitting the disease to people around you, ensure good handwashing and hygiene.

What can be done to prevent salmonellosis?

- Handwashing is the best prevention. Make sure hands are properly washed after using the toilet, handling diapers, pets, livestock or before preparing food.
- Clean and sanitize counter tops and utensils after contact with raw meats and poultry, especially before using these areas to prepare ready-to-eat foods.
- If possible, separate work areas and utensils for preparing raw and cooked foods.
- Cook meat, poultry and egg products thoroughly. Eggs cooked “over easy” or “sunny side up” are incompletely cooked.
- Avoid using raw eggs in egg-nogs, salad dressing, ice cream and desserts. Never use dirty or cracked eggs.
- When cooking poultry keep stuffing separate.
- Keep cold foods at 4° C or lower. Keep hot foods at 60° C or higher.
- Drink only pasteurized milk.
- Drink water from a safe supply. Have your well water tested to ensure it is safe to drink.
- If ill with diarrhea, avoid preparing or handling food.
- Turtles, chicks, ducks and exotic pets may carry salmonella. These are not suitable pets for small children.

Are there any special concerns about salmonellosis?

Individuals with salmonellosis, who provide services to others, particularly seniors or children should not work while symptomatic.

For more information please call the Communicable Disease Team in the Barrie Office at (705) 721-7520.

Reference:

Heymann DL, editor. Control of Communicable Diseases Manual. 18th ed. Washington, DC: American Public Health Association;2004:469-473.