

Salmonella

Salmonella infection is a type of food poisoning that can cause diarrhoea and stomach cramps. It is usually caught from food prepared by someone who has the illness, or food contaminated with the bacteria (especially raw chicken and other poultry). Salmonella is common in New Zealand.

Some people can get very ill from salmonella, especially young children and older people. If you have symptoms it's important to stay home from work, school or day care until at least 48 hours after symptoms stop.

How it spreads

You can get salmonella poisoning from:

- eating under-cooked meat and chicken
- handling raw meat and chicken contaminated with salmonella
- eating raw or poorly cooked eggs
- drinking unpasteurised (raw) milk
- drinking water from rivers, streams, and shallow waters that has the bacteria in it
- from not washing hands after touching animals and birds

People who have salmonella can also pass the bacteria out of their body in their poo (faeces). If you then eat food, drink water or touch things contaminated with bacteria from the infected poo you can be infected too.

For example, children's toys can often be contaminated by the bacteria, and people can easily pass on the infection if they prepare food for others.

Symptoms

Salmonella symptoms can include:

- diarrhoea
- stomach pain or cramps
- feeling or being sick

Symptoms usually appear six to 72 hours after becoming infected.

The symptoms usually last one to seven days. In more severe cases they can last up to ten days.

If you have symptoms

Most people with salmonella can self-manage their recovery at home. Seek health advice if your symptoms are ongoing or become more severe.

- Contact your doctor, or call Healthline for free on 0800 611 116.
- Your doctor may request a faeces (poo) sample for testing.
- Testing is the only way to confirm what illness you have.

Restrictions

If you have salmonella you are at risk of passing on the virus to others.

You should stay home from work, school or daycare until you have been free of diarrhoea symptoms for at least 48 hours (2 days).

To prevent the spread of salmonella it's important to wash hands with soapy water for 20 seconds, then dry well with a clean cloth or paper towel every time:

- after going to the toilet
- before preparing food, eating or drinking
- after changing babies nappies

If you have symptoms, avoid preparing food for other people. If you must do so, wash and dry your hands well first.

Prevention

In addition to practising good hand hygiene, you can also reduce the risk to you and others by following simple precautions.

Food safety

- Thaw meat in the fridge and not at room temperature.
- Keep raw meat covered and separate from other foods, and store at the bottom of the fridge.
- Use separate chopping boards when preparing raw foods and cooked foods, or wash the board in hot soapy water between preparing raw and cooked foods.

- Cook chicken thoroughly until the juices are clear.
- Cook all minced meat patties and sausages thoroughly.
- Avoid drinking raw (unpasteurised) milk and raw milk products.
- Avoid eating shellfish which has been gathered from contaminated waters.
- Wash fruit and vegetables before use.

Safe drinking water

- Avoid drinking water that has not been treated – including water from lakes, rivers or streams, or from an area where you don't know the quality of source water.
- If you have to drink untreated water that is taken from a roof, river or lake (eg, in a rural area), it should be boiled for 1 minute or treated.

Swimming

Don't go swimming in a pool if you have diarrhoea. You need to wait at least two weeks after the symptoms have gone.

Bathing and washing

If you or a child are unwell then do not share bathwater, as this can easily spread the infection.

For more information

For more information visit:

www.arphs.nz/salmonella

If you are concerned about salmonella call Healthline for free on 0800 611 116 or contact your doctor or practice nurse.