

SALMONELLA

PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

What is Salmonella?

Salmonella is a bacterial disease that gets into the intestines and causes illness. Salmonella is usually found in foods of animal origin, such as beef, poultry, unpasteurized milk or raw eggs. However, all foods, including fruits and vegetables can become contaminated with salmonella.

How is it spread?

Most types of salmonella live in the intestinal tracts of animals and birds and are transmitted to humans by contaminated foods, such as beef, poultry, milk, or eggs. Salmonella bacteria are also shed in the feces of infected individuals and unless there is proper hand washing after bowel movements, the bacteria can be spread from contaminated hands to food during preparation. Salmonella can be found in the feces of some pets including cats, dogs, chicks, turtles, snakes and iguanas. It is possible to become infected by coming in contact with the feces of infected pets. Again, good hand washing after handling pets is recommended. The incubation period for salmonella infection is 6 to 72 hours after exposure.

How is it treated?

Salmonella is usually diagnosed by checking a stool sample. Salmonella infections are not usually treated with antibiotics because they do not shorten the course of this diarrhea illness. However, antibiotic therapy may be prescribed for those at risk of invasive disease such as, infants younger than 3 months of age, persons with chronic GI disease, those with HIV infection or other immunosuppressive illnesses. Stool collection and testing is recommended after symptoms have subsided. Food handlers, day care workers and attendees may be excluded until symptoms are gone and stool culture is normal. Occasionally, salmonella can be shed in the stool for several weeks or months after symptoms resolve.

How can we prevent Salmonella?

- Do not eat raw eggs or raw (unpasteurized) milk.
- Throw away cracked eggs because they may have the bacteria in them.
- Cook meat well before eating it. Put cooked meat into a refrigerator right after a meal.
- Scrub cutting boards, counters, and utensils with hot soapy water after contact with raw or cooked meat, poultry or eggs.
- Wash your hands and your children's hands after using the bathroom, after changing diapers, before eating, before and after making food, between handling food items, and after playing with animals.

SYMPTOMS OF SALMONELLA

Often a person with Salmonella may have:

- headache
- nausea and vomiting
- abdominal pain
- fever
- diarrhea

LIVINGSTON COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
2300 E. GRAND RIVER AVE., SUITE 102, HOWELL, MI 48843-7578
(517) 546-9850
www.lchd.org