

Diseases Fact Sheet - Salmonellosis

South Dakota Department of Health

Office of Disease Prevention Services - 605-773-3737 -(1-800-592-1861 in South Dakota only)

This material is provided for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for medical care. We are not able to answer personal medical questions. Please see your health care provider concerning appropriate care, treatment or other medical advice.

What is it?

Salmonellosis is a bacterial infection that generally affects the intestinal tract and occasionally the bloodstream. It is one of the more common causes of gastroenteritis. Most cases occur in the summer months and are seen as single cases, clusters or outbreaks.

Who gets salmonellosis?

Any person can get salmonellosis, but it is recognized more often in infants and children.

How are salmonella bacteria spread?

Salmonella are spread by eating or drinking food or water contaminated by contact with infected people or animals.

What are the symptoms of salmonellosis?

People exposed to the salmonella may experience mild or severe diarrhea, fever, abdominal pain and occasionally vomiting. Bloodstream infections can be quite serious, particularly in the very young or elderly.

How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

The symptoms generally appear one to three days after exposure.

Where are salmonella found?

Salmonella are widely distributed in our food chain and environment. The organisms often contaminate raw meats, eggs, unpasteurized milk and cheese products. A wide range of domestic and wild animals, including poultry, swine, cattle, rodents, songbirds and pets such as iguanas, tortoises, turtles, terrapins, chicks, dogs, and cats, as well as humans, can serve as reservoirs for the infectious agent. Birds and reptiles are often long-term carriers of salmonella.

For how long can an infected person carry the salmonella germ?

The carrier state varies from several days to many months. Infants and people who have been treated with oral antibiotics tend to carry the germ longer than others.

Do infected people need to be isolated or excluded from work or school?

Since salmonella are in the feces, only people with active diarrhea who are unable to control their bowel habits (infants, young children, certain handicapped individuals, for example) should be isolated. Most infected people may return to work or school when their stools become formed, provided that they carefully wash their hands after toilet visits. Food handlers and health care workers must obtain the approval of the local or state health department before returning to their routine activities. These persons should be excluded from duties until two fecal specimens collected at least 24 hours apart and at least 48 hours after completion of antibiotics, are negative on culture.

What is the treatment for salmonellosis?

Most people with salmonellosis will recover on their own or require fluids to prevent dehydration. Antibiotics and anti-diarrheal drugs are generally not recommended for typical cases with intestinal infections.

How can salmonellosis be prevented?

1. Always treat raw poultry, beef and pork as if they are contaminated and handle accordingly:
 - Wrap fresh meats in plastic bags at the market to prevent blood from dripping on other foods.
 - Refrigerate foods promptly; minimize holding at room temperature.
 - Cutting boards and counters used for preparation should be washed immediately after use to prevent cross contamination with other foods.
 - Avoid eating raw or under cooked meats.
 - Ensure that the correct internal cooking temperature is reached - particularly when using a microwave.
2. Avoid eating raw eggs or under cooking foods containing raw eggs.
3. Avoid using raw milk.
4. Encourage careful hand-washing before and after food preparation.
5. Make sure children, particularly those who handle pets, attend to hand-washing.

Related Sites:



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- If you or your child have a diarrheal illness, remember, a stool sample is needed to determine what is causing the diarrhea and who might be at risk for spread of the disease from the ill individual.
- Kits for collecting the stool sample are available from the South Dakota Department of Health's local [Disease Intervention Offices](#) or from the [State Public Health Laboratory](#). (There is a charge for the testing.)
- If *salmonella*, *E. coli*, rotavirus, *shigella* or campylobacteriosis is diagnosed, department disease intervention staff may contact you about potential exposures such as food, farm animals or other ill individuals.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
 - [Salmonella Infections Linked to Live Poultry in Backyard Flocks](#)
 - [Safely Keeping Backyard Poultry](#)
- [FoodSafety.gov — Salmonella information](#)