

## 1 What is salmonella?

Salmonella bacteria cause food poisoning. Anyone can get salmonella, but young children, the elderly and people who have immune systems that are not working properly (including people with cancer, AIDS or alcoholism) have a greater risk of becoming severely ill.

## 2 How do you get infected with salmonella?

You usually get salmonella by eating contaminated food. Salmonella bacteria live in the gut of many farm animals and can affect meat, eggs, poultry, and milk. Other foods like green vegetables, fruit and shellfish can become contaminated through contact with manure in the soil or sewage in the water.

Dogs, cats, and rodents can occasionally become infected.

Salmonella can be spread from person to person by poor hygiene, by failing to wash your hands properly after going to the toilet, or after handling contaminated food.

## 3 How can you avoid getting infected with salmonella?

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water:
  - before preparing and eating food
  - after handling raw food
  - after going to the toilet or changing a baby's nappy
  - after contact with pets and other animals, especially reptiles and amphibians
  - after working in the garden
- Keep cooked food away from raw food
- Store raw foods below cooked or ready-to-eat foods in the fridge to prevent contamination
- Wash raw fruits and vegetables thoroughly before eating
- Cook food thoroughly, especially meat, so that it is piping hot
- Keep all kitchen surfaces and equipment including knives, chopping boards and dish cloths clean

- Do not drink untreated water from lakes, rivers or streams
- If someone has salmonella, wash all dirty clothes, bedding and towels in the washing machine on the hottest cycle possible. Clean toilet seats, toilet bowls, flush handles, taps and wash hand basins after use with detergent and hot water, followed by a household disinfectant

## 4 What are the symptoms of salmonella and how long do they last?

Diarrhoea, stomach cramps and sometimes vomiting and fever. It usually takes from 12 to 72 hours for the symptoms to develop. Symptoms usually last for four to seven days. Most people recover without treatment, but if you become seriously ill you may need hospital care because the dehydration (fluid loss) caused by the illness can be life-threatening.

If you have concerns about your health contact NHS Direct on 0845 4647, visit their website <http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk>, or see your family doctor.

## 5 How do you treat salmonella?

Drink plenty of fluids as diarrhoea or vomiting can lead to dehydration and you can lose important sugars and minerals from your body. Your doctor may recommend a re-hydration solution.

Sometimes severe cases are treated with antibiotics and/or admitted to hospital.

## 6 Do I need to stay off work or school?

Yes. While you are ill and have symptoms you are infectious. Children and adults should stay away from nursery, school or work for 48 hours after the symptoms have stopped.

You should tell your employer you have had salmonella if you work with vulnerable groups such as the elderly, the young, those in poor health, or handle food.

## 7 The Health Protection Agency and salmonella

More information about the Health Protection Agency and salmonella is available on our website at <http://www.hpa.org.uk>.

Health Protection Agency East Midlands  
**Health Protection Agency -  
East Midlands South**  
Atellus House, 2 Smith Way,  
Grove Park, Enderby,  
Leicester, LE19 1SX  
Tel: 08442254524  
Fax: 0116 263 0435

# Salmonella



If you have any further questions,  
please contact: