



## Hawaii State Department of Health

### Disease Investigation Branch

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## Salmonellosis

### What is salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is an infection of the gut caused by *Salmonella* bacteria. These bacteria are a frequent cause of food poisoning. *Salmonella* has also been used as a bioterrorist weapon.

### How do you get it?

*Salmonella* bacteria are naturally found in animals including birds, and live in their intestinal tracts. The main ways people get sick with salmonellosis are 1) eating food or drinking water that is contaminated by salmonella bacteria, 2) by touching an animal that has salmonella on their exterior (including lizards, turtles, chicks, dogs, cats and rodents) and not washing your hands thoroughly after the animal interaction, or 3) by someone who is sick and did not wash their hands properly after using the restroom then touching something that other people put in their mouth (i.e. an ill food handler making food).

Foods that are often connected to *salmonella* food poisoning include eggs, poultry, beef, pork, and unpasteurized dairy products, but any food contaminated with the bacteria can be a source of infection.

### What are the symptoms of salmonellosis?

The symptoms include sudden onset of diarrhea, low-grade fever, stomach pain, headache, and sometimes vomiting. The diarrhea and loss of appetite often last for several days or weeks after most of the other symptoms have stopped.

### When do symptoms start?

The symptoms usually start 12 to 36 hours after infection with the bacteria, but the onset can vary from 6 to 72 hours.

### What is the treatment for salmonellosis?

Fluid and electrolyte replacement is most important. Most persons with salmonellosis will recover without treatment. However, a doctor can prescribe medicines to treat severe cases of the disease. Infants, the elderly, and those with other medical problems should be evaluated by a doctor.

### Should a person with salmonellosis go to work or school?

Students with diarrhea should stay home from school until the diarrhea stops. Food handlers, day care workers, and health care workers should not return to work until they prove they are no longer infectious, usually after two lab tests showing they are no longer infected.

### How can you keep from getting it?

Wash your hands thoroughly after using the toilet, after changing diapers, after handling pets, and especially before preparing or eating food.

Cook poultry and meats to an even inner temperature (usually 165°F or higher), especially when using a microwave. Check food temperatures with a thermometer.

Do not drink unpasteurized (raw) milk or eat raw or undercooked meat, and refrigerate foods promptly after purchase. Do not eat raw eggs or foods containing raw eggs.

Always treat raw poultry, beef, and pork as if they were contaminated. Keep food that will be eaten raw, such as vegetables, from becoming contaminated by animal products. After handling raw meat, do not lick your fingers, touch other foods, or smoke a cigarette without washing your hands first.

Wash cutting boards thoroughly after contact with each food, so that the boards do not contaminate the next food prepared.

Avoid letting infants or young children touch reptiles, such as turtles, lizards, or iguanas. Wash hands after any contact with pets, farm animals, and other animals, especially baby chicks.

Do not drink untreated water (ponds, streams, rivers).

Avoid sexual practices that may permit fecal-oral transmission.

For more information, see the CDC's website at <https://www.cdc.gov/salmonella/>