

Salmonellosis

What is salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is an infection of the bowel caused by the *Salmonella* species bacteria.

How is it spread?

Spread from person to person occurs when hands, objects (such as toys), food or water contaminated by tiny amounts of faeces from infected people are put into the mouth of an uninfected person. Spread also occurs by eating food from infected animals or food contaminated by infected animals. This includes raw and undercooked eggs, meat and poultry or their products



What are the symptoms?

The symptoms usually develop between 6 to 72 hours after infection, but most commonly between 12 to 36 hours.



Symptoms of salmonellosis include watery diarrhoea (sometimes with blood or mucus), fever, headache, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting and loss of appetite.



In healthy people the diarrhoea usually improves within several days to a week but persists for longer in a small number of people. It may be several months before bowel habits are entirely normal.



The disease tends to be more severe in children, the elderly and those with impaired immune systems.

Sometimes the infection spreads beyond the bowel to the blood and other parts of the body, this can be very serious and require hospital treatment.

What is the infectious period?

While the *Salmonella* bacteria remains in their faeces, infected people can pass the infection on to others. This can be from several days to several weeks. Some people 'carry' the bacteria in their bowel for months after the illness. They appear well but can still spread the infection. Children who are not toilet trained and 'carry' the bacteria are an important source of infection to parents and within child care settings.

Who is at risk?

The most severe illness is seen in children, the elderly and those with impaired immune systems.

Children who attend childcare facilities are at greater risk of infections spread through faeces contamination. Spread occurs when children share toys or food that has become contaminated and place it in their mouths. Particular care has to be taken wherever there are children in nappies.



What is the treatment?

Antibiotics are generally not recommended for salmonellosis.

Anyone with diarrhoea should drink extra fluids to avoid dehydration. Children with diarrhoea, who vomit or who refuse extra fluids should see a doctor. Anyone with prolonged or severe diarrhoea, or who has symptoms causing concern should see a doctor.

Medicines to prevent vomiting or diarrhoea should not be given, especially to children, except where specifically advised by a doctor.

How can salmonellosis be prevented?

Good hygiene is the best way to prevent salmonellosis.

Hands should be washed thoroughly with warm soapy water:

- after going to the toilet
- before preparing or handling food
- after handling raw poultry and meats
- after every nappy change
- after changing soiled linen
- after touching animals, reptiles, birds or other pets.

Other measures include:

- never change nappies on tables or counters where food is prepared or eaten
- clean change areas with warm soapy water and disinfectant after every nappy change

- clean books, toys, equipment, furnishings, floors and toilets regularly (including toilet door handles)
- cook all meat and eggs thoroughly before eating
- avoid using dirty or cracked eggs
- do not consume raw or unpasteurised milk or other dairy products
- wash hands, kitchen work surfaces, and utensils with warm soapy water immediately after they have been in contact with raw meat or poultry

People with diarrhoea should not prepare or handle food that will be eaten by others.

How can it be controlled?

Anyone with diarrhoea should not attend childcare/school/work until the diarrhoea has ceased.

Anyone with diarrhoea should not swim, wade or paddle in public pools.

For more information contact your nearest Centre for Disease Control.

Darwin	8922 8044
Katherine	8973 9049
Nhulunbuy	8987 0359
Tennant Creek	8962 4259
Alice Springs	8951 7549

Disease Control fact sheets on various topics are available by contacting your nearest centre or from our web site at <http://www.nt.gov.au/health/cdc>