

What is Salmonella?

Salmonella are germs (bacteria) that cause an infectious disease (called "salmonellosis") of the bowel in humans and animals. Although the disease is usually limited to the bowel, the salmonella germ can spread to other systems of the body, such as the blood and bone. This may cause serious complications in infants and in people who are very old or who have weakened immune systems.

What are the symptoms?



The most common symptoms are stomach cramps, diarrhea, fever, nausea, and sometimes vomiting. Symptoms can take up to three days to show up, but most often begin 12 to 36 hours after the germs are swallowed. Symptoms generally last for several days. Some people with salmonellosis become sick enough to require hospitalization.

How is salmonella spread?



The germs must be swallowed to cause disease. Usually this happens when someone eats food that not been properly handled, prepared or cooked. The germs can also spread when people do not wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water after using the toilet, changing diapers, or handling reptiles. People who get the germs on their hands can infect themselves by eating, smoking, or touching their mouths. They can also spread the germs to anyone or anything they touch, especially food, which can then make others sick if not cooked enough to kill the germs. Salmonella is commonly spread from person to person in day-care centers and other environments where hygiene may be poor.

What types of food are most likely to spread salmonella?



Salmonella germs are common in uncooked food products from animals, such as eggs, egg products, meat, meat products, poultry, unpasteurized milk and other unpasteurized dairy products. However, thorough cooking and processing will kill the germ. Salmonella can be in any type of food if salmonella germs get on the food. For example, a food handler with salmonella may get germs on the food if his or her hands are not washed thoroughly before preparing food.

How can you prevent salmonellosis?



The most important things to remember are that the germs can only make you sick if you swallow them, and that the germs are killed by thoroughly washing your hands with soap and water and by thorough cooking. Be extra careful when using food products from animals, such as eggs, poultry, meats, and dairy products. Follow the tips below; if you make them your habits, you can prevent salmonellosis-as well as other diseases:

- Always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water before eating or preparing food, after using the toilet, after changing diapers, and after touching your pets or other animals.
- Thoroughly cook all food products from animals, especially poultry and eggs. Do not eat raw or cracked eggs, unpasteurized milk, or other unpasteurized dairy products.
- Keep food that will be eaten raw, such as vegetables, from becoming contaminated by animal-derived food products. For example: scrub your hands, all utensils and surfaces that have been in contact with raw poultry before you make a salad.

Where can I get more information? Contact Foodlink's Nutritionist (585) 328-3380 x125