

# Salmonellosis (Salmonella)

## Information Sheet

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### What is it?

Salmonellosis is a common disease caused by the bacteria *Salmonella* which live in the intestines (gut) of people, birds and animals. It is pronounced, sal-mo-nel-osis. It is commonly called salmonella, pronounced as sal-mo-nella.

It is a short term illness that can make you feel very sick in the stomach and gut.

### What are the signs and symptoms?

Symptoms usually start within 12 - 36 hours, but may start up to 72 hours, after contact with *Salmonella* bacteria.

Symptoms include:

- stomach pain
- diarrhoea, pronounced dy-a-rea (runny poo)
- fever
- nausea (sickness in the stomach and an urge to vomit)
- headache.

Some people also vomit. Some people who are infected do not have symptoms.

Symptoms usually last 4 - 7 days but can last as long as 10 days.

If you have these symptoms or suspect you might have salmonellosis you need to see a doctor. You will need to give the doctor a poo sample for testing for salmonellosis.

It is possible to get salmonellosis more than once.

### How serious is it?

People usually make a complete recovery and have no severe or long lasting illness.

A few people need to go to hospital if they have severe diarrhoea or the infection spreads from the

gut to the blood stream and other parts of the body.

Salmonellosis is a notifiable disease under the Health Act. This means your doctor must tell the District Health Board (DHB) if you have it. People with salmonellosis who are involved in a job where it could be easily spread, such as working with food, or in childcare or health care, will be contacted by a Health Protection Officer to try and work out how they got salmonellosis (in case other people might get sick the same way).

### Who is most at risk?

You are more likely to get salmonellosis if you have contact with sick animals, have poor hand or food hygiene, drink raw milk or drink untreated water.

Children who are 5 years old and younger, adults over 65 years old and people with weakened immune systems are the most likely to have severe symptoms.

### How could I get infected?

You get infected when you swallow the *Salmonella* bacteria. This can happen when you:

- eat food that has been undercooked, contaminated or poorly handled. *Salmonella* has been found most commonly in eggs, meat, poultry and milk but can also be in other foods such as green vegetables contaminated by manure or sandwiches handled by an infected food handler
- touch infected farm animals (such as poultry, sheep, cattle, pigs), household pets (including cats and dogs, birds and reptiles such as turtles), and wild animals (rodents, birds). These infected animals often do not show signs of disease

- drink from an untreated water supply. Animals can contaminate water collected from roofs, bores, creeks, lakes and streams.

You can infect other people while the *Salmonella* bacteria is in your body and poo – this can be several days to several weeks. It is possible, especially in children under 5 years old, to still have *Salmonella* in their poo for more than a year.

### *How do I protect myself and others?*

There is no vaccine to prevent salmonellosis.

#### *To avoid getting salmonellosis:*

- regularly wash your hands with soap and dry them thoroughly, especially after contact with animals, going to the toilet, changing a nappy, caring for a sick person and before preparing or eating food
- ensure food (particularly poultry, ground beef, and eggs) is properly cooked and still hot when served
- do not eat or drink foods containing raw eggs or raw (unpasteurised) milk
- store raw meat and poultry separate from other foods at the bottom of the fridge
- wash fruits and vegetables carefully with safe water, particularly if you eat them raw
- wash hands, kitchen work surfaces and utensils with soap and water immediately after they have been in contact with raw meat or poultry
- clean and disinfect surfaces and articles soiled with poo
- take your pet to the vet if it has diarrhoea
- only drink water that is treated and known to be safe. If you are not sure if the water is safe boil it first. If you have your own water supply, protect it from animal and bird poo and treat the water.

#### *To avoid spreading salmonellosis:*

- regularly wash and dry your hands thoroughly
- do not go swimming in pools until you have had no symptoms for 2 weeks
- do not prepare food for others until you have had no symptoms for 48 hours (2 days).

### *Will I need to take time off work, school or preschool?*

Anyone with diarrhoea or vomiting should not go to work, school or day-care until they have had no symptoms for 2 days.

Food handlers, health care workers, childcare workers and children attending early childcare will need clearance from a doctor or nurse before they are allowed to return. Clearance usually involves providing a poo sample to check if there are any bacteria present. For further advice about who needs clearance, please contact Hawke's Bay District Health Board Population Health on (06) 834 1815.

### *How is it treated?*

It is important to rest and drink plenty of water to prevent dehydration. Most people recover without needing medicine. Antibiotics or other treatment may be needed, particularly for the very young and the elderly, if they get dehydrated.

### *Where can I get further information?*

For further information on salmonellosis please contact your doctor or Hawke's Bay District Health Board Population Health on (06) 834 1815. You can also phone Healthline on 0800 611 116 at any time of the day or night to speak to a registered nurse.