



Salem/Cumberland County Health Department
SALMONELLOSIS
(PUBLIC HANDOUT)

What is salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is an infection with bacteria called salmonella.

What are the symptoms of salmonellosis?

- Diarrhea
- Fever
- Abdominal cramps

These symptoms will occur 12-72 hours after infection. The illness usually lasts 4-7 days, and most people recover without treatment. However, in some cases the diarrhea may be so severe that the person needs to stay at the hospital. In these cases, the infection may spread from the intestines to the blood stream, and then to other places of the body and cause death unless treated promptly. The elderly, infants, and those with weak immune systems are most likely to have severe illness.

How do people catch salmonella?

Salmonella bacteria live in the intestines of humans and other animals. The bacteria are usually spread to humans by eating foods contaminated with animal feces. Contaminated



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foods usually look and smell normal. Contaminated foods are often of animal origin, such as beef, poultry, milk, or eggs, but all foods, including vegetables may become contaminated.

Food may also become contaminated by unwashed hands of an infected food handler, who forgot to wash his or her hands with soap after using the bathroom.

How is salmonellosis treated?

Salmonella infections usually clear up in 5-7 days and often do not require treatment unless the patient becomes severely dehydrated or the infection spreads from the intestines. Those who develop severe diarrhea may require rehydrating with intravenous fluids. Antibiotics are not usually necessary unless the infection spreads.

What can a person do to prevent this illness?

There is not vaccine to prevent salmonellosis. Since foods of animal origin may be contaminated with salmonella, people should not eat raw or undercooked eggs, poultry, or meat. Poultry and meat, including hamburgers, should be well-cooked, not pink in the middle. People also should not consume raw or unpasteurized milk or other dairy products.



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Cross contamination of foods should be avoided. For example, uncooked meats should be kept separate from produce, cooked foods, and ready-to-eat foods. Hands, cutting boards, counters, knives, and other utensils should be washed thoroughly after handling uncooked food.

People who have salmonellosis should not prepare food or pour water for others until they have been shown to no longer be carrying the bacteria.