

Infection Prevention and Control

Salmonella



Patient Information Leaflet

What is salmonella?

Salmonella is a group of bacteria that cause food poisoning. It can cause diarrhoea, stomach cramps and sometimes vomiting and a high temperature. Most people recover without treatment, but if you become very ill you may need hospital care to replace the fluid you have lost.

On average, it takes from 12 to 72 hours for the symptoms to develop. Symptoms usually last for four to seven days and most clear up without treatment.

How do you get infected with salmonella?

You usually get salmonella by eating contaminated food. Salmonella bacteria live in the gut of many farm animals and can affect meat, eggs, poultry, and milk. Other foods like green vegetables, fruit and shellfish e.g. prawns or crabs, can become contaminated through contact with manure in the soil or sewage in the water.

It is impossible to tell from its appearance whether food is contaminated with salmonella. It will look, smell and taste normal stored together.

Most tortoises and terrapins and other pet reptiles can also carry salmonella. Dogs, cats, and rodents can occasionally become infected.

Salmonella can be spread from person to person by poor hygiene, by failing to wash your hands properly after going to the toilet, or after handling contaminated food.

Who gets salmonella?

Anyone can get salmonella, but young children, the elderly and people who have a poor immune system, including people with cancer, AIDS or alcoholism have a greater risk of becoming severely ill.

What will happen to me?

You may be looked after in a single room until you are free from symptoms for 48 hours. Staff may wear aprons and gloves when carrying out your care. This is to stop the infection spreading to other patients.

How do you treat salmonella?

It is important to drink plenty of fluids as diarrhoea or vomiting can lead to dehydration and you can lose important sugars and minerals from your body.

If you feel sick, try taking small sips of water frequently.

Avoid tea, coffee, carbonated drinks or alcohol.

Always dilute sugary drinks even if you would not normally dilute them.

Sometimes severe cases are treated with antibiotics. If you are given antibiotics it is essential that you complete the course as prescribed.

What will I need to do at home?

If someone has salmonella, wash all dirty clothes, bedding and towels in the washing machine on the hottest cycle possible. Clean toilet seats, toilet bowls, flush handles, taps and wash hand basins after use with detergent and hot water, followed by a household disinfectant such as bleach.

Do I need to stay off work or school?

Yes. While you are ill and have symptoms you are infectious. Children and adults should stay away from nursery, school or work for 48 hours after the symptoms have stopped.

You should tell your employer you have had salmonella if you work with vulnerable groups such as the elderly, the young, those in poor health, or if you handle food.

How can you avoid getting re-infected with salmonella?

Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water:

- before preparing and eating food
- after handling raw food
- after going to the toilet or changing a baby's nappy
- after contact with pets and other animals, especially reptiles and amphibians
- after working in the garden

Keep cooked food away from raw food. It is best to store raw foods below cooked foods. Wash raw fruits and vegetables thoroughly before eating.

Cook food thoroughly, especially meat, so that it is piping hot. Ensure to keep all kitchen surfaces and equipment including knives, chopping boards and dish cloths clean.

Do not drink water from lakes, rivers or streams
Do not keep reptiles or amphibians in households where there is a child under 1 year of age, or someone with poor immunity.

Should you have any further questions or require further advice please speak to your doctor, nurse or Infection Prevention staff.

Infection Prevention Team 01535 294848

Write any questions/queries below

The Public Health England website and will give further guidance and information: <https://www.gov.uk/health-protection/infectious-diseases>

If you require this leaflet in other languages or formats please telephone the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on: 01535 294019 for advice.

Please raise any issue you may have about your care and treatment with a member of staff. Raising your concerns will not adversely affect the care you will receive.

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