

# Salmonella

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## What is Salmonella?

Salmonellosis is caused by infection with bacteria called *Salmonella*. In Australia, most *Salmonella* infections occur after eating contaminated food or sometimes after contact with another person with the infection.

## What are the symptoms?

People infected with *Salmonella* commonly develop headache, fever, stomach cramps, diarrhoea, nausea, and vomiting. Symptoms often start 6-72 hours after infection. Symptoms usually last for 4-7 days, sometimes much longer.

All age groups are susceptible to *Salmonella* infection. However, infants, the elderly, and people with poor immune systems, are more likely to have a severe illness.

The infective dose can be as few as 15 to 20 cells; depending on the age and health of the individual, and type of *Salmonella*.

To diagnose it, your general practitioner or local hospital will send a stool sample to a laboratory for *Salmonella* testing

## How does it affect human health?

*Salmonella* is one of the leading causes of food poisoning in Australia each year. Almost any food may be contaminated with *Salmonella* due to mishandling or improper hygiene. Food handlers can be carriers and contaminate food during preparation.

*Salmonella* poisoning from food sources has been linked to raw meats, poultry, eggs, peanut butter, orange juice, milk and dairy products. Contamination usually results from external sources such as animal faeces, humans, polluted water or dust.

## How can the risk of infection be minimised?

- *Salmonella* is a type of bacteria which can grow between 7°C and 47°C, this is within the commonly referred to "temperature danger zone" (5°C and 60°C). Keep cold food in the fridge until you are ready to cook or serve; serve hot food steaming hot.
- Store raw foods (such as meat) in sealed containers in the bottom of the fridge or freezer to prevent any fluid dripping or spilling onto other ready-to eat food. Cover all foods in the refrigerator and freezer to protect them from contamination.
- Cook food thoroughly. Cook poultry, minced meats, and sausages until well done, right through to the centre. No pink should be left visible.
- Separate raw and cooked food and don't use the same utensils, especially cutting boards, for both.
- Thoroughly wash all dirt off any raw vegetables and

fruits before preparing and eating them.

- Wash your hands in hot soapy water and dry thoroughly before preparing food, and after touching raw meat and chicken.
- Keep utensils and kitchen clean.

## What else can I do?

Education and training are important control tools for *Salmonella* because much of the disease results from poor handling practices. This extends from the farm, where poor animal husbandry and horticultural practices can lead to contamination, to the consumer, where mishandling and incorrect cooking/preparation can occur.

Be particularly careful with foods prepared for infants, the elderly and the immuno-compromised.

The NSW Food Authority's "SAFE FOOD TIPS" fact sheet details many other ways to minimise the risk from *Salmonella*. It is available on the Authority's web site.

For more information on *Salmonella* visit the NSW Health website at [www.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au)