

Salmonella Fact Sheet

What is Salmonella?

Salmonella is a type of bacteria which causes food poisoning.

What are the symptoms of Salmonella?

The most common symptoms are;

- Diarrhoea (liquid stool)
- Stomach cramps

Other symptoms sometimes can include fever, vomiting and muscle aches)

It can take up to three days between swallowing the Salmonella and actually becoming ill with symptoms. This means it is not always your most recent meal that was contaminated with Salmonella.

Where does Salmonella come from?

Salmonella lives naturally in the gut of many farm animals and can contaminate meat, eggs and other food.

Domestic dogs and cats, most tortoises and terrapins and other exotic reptile pets can also carry Salmonella in their guts.

How do I catch Salmonella?

The commonest way of catching Salmonella is by eating under-cooked food. It is impossible to tell whether food is contaminated with Salmonella; it will look, smell and taste normal.

It can also be spread from another person suffering from Salmonella if they have not washed their hands properly after going to the toilet or handling contaminated foods.

How will I know if I have Salmonella?

If you are ill with diarrhoea or other symptoms listed above, you should contact your doctor. You may be asked to provide a stool sample. This will be tested for Salmonella in a laboratory. The results usually take a few days.

How do I avoid it catching Salmonella?

All meat, poultry and eggs should be thoroughly cooked before eating.

If you handle raw meat, especially chicken, make sure you thoroughly wash and dry your hands, knives, chopping boards etc before handling foods which are ready to eat.

What special care should I take?

Make sure you wash your hands and dry them thoroughly after going to the toilet and before preparing food.

Drink plenty of water to replace fluid lost by diarrhoea or vomiting.

How long should I stay off work/school/nursery?

- Most adults and children over five years should stay away from work until they are feeling better.
- People working with food must stay off work until they have been symptom free for two days. You must tell your employer about your illness.
- People working with vulnerable groups e.g. the young, elderly or those in poor health, must stay off work until they have been symptom free for two days. You must tell your employer about your illness.
- Young children should stay away from playgroups, childminders or nursery school until they have been symptom free for two days.

Who cares if I have Salmonella?

Your GP and local EHO (Environmental Health Officer) care.

Your GP will give you advice about the medical aspects of Salmonella. Your local EHO may also contact you and offer advice and ask some questions to try to find out where the illness has come from and help you prevent passing it on to others.

For further information and advice, please contact:

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