

## Salmonellosis (SAL-mon-elle-O-sis)

### What is salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is a food-borne infection caused by *Salmonella* bacteria. It is one of the main causes of food-borne illnesses worldwide. These bacteria grow in the small intestine and invade the gut lining.

### How salmonellosis is spread?

*Salmonella* infection usually occurs when people eat food contaminated with the bacteria. *Salmonella* bacteria are commonly found in the intestine of livestock, poultry, cats, dogs, rats, turtles, exotic pets (i.e. iguanas) and other animals. The most common cause of illness is due to consuming raw and undercooked eggs and egg products, raw milk, contaminated water, raw meats including poultry and unwashed fruits and vegetables. If foods such as eggs and meats are not properly cooked, the bacteria can survive to cause illness when these foods are eaten. Salmonellosis can also be passed from person-to-person through the fecal-oral route in which an infected person can spread the bacteria if they do not wash their hands properly after using the washroom.

### What are the symptoms?

Symptoms appear from six to 72 hours after consuming the contaminated food or beverage. Typical symptoms include the sudden onset of cramps accompanied by diarrhea, nausea, fever, chills, headache, and vomiting. Children, the elderly, and those with weakened immune systems are most susceptible to dehydration in cases where diarrhea is severe. Further complications can include infection spreading to the bloodstream or other tissues in the body. Some strains of *Salmonella* can cause more serious illness such as typhoid fever. Most infections do not require treatment; however, in a small number of cases, *Salmonella* infection can be life threatening to infants, children, the elderly or people with immune system disorders. Some people may recover from symptoms but can become carriers of the bacteria for a period of time. In rarer cases, infection can cause joint pain, eye irritation, and painful urination called Reiter's syndrome. If symptoms persist or worsen it is important to seek medical attention.

### How to prevent salmonellosis infection?

- Thorough hand washing is the best prevention. Make sure hands are properly washed after using the toilet, changing diapers, handling animals, or before preparing foods.
- Infected people should not work as food handlers or care providers until they are deemed clear by the Public Health Department.
- Clean and sanitize counter tops and utensils after contact with raw meats and poultry.
- Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly before eating.
- Cook meat, poultry and egg products thoroughly. Cook stuffing/dressing separately.
- Drink only pasteurized milk. Never let children sample raw milk directly from the animal.
- Avoid using raw eggs in homemade egg-nogs and never use dirty or cracked eggs.
- Keep cold foods at 4°C or lower. Keep hot foods at 60°C or higher.
- Drink water from a safe supply. Have your well water tested to ensure it is safe to drink.
- Turtles, chicks, ducks, and exotic pets, such as iguanas, salamanders and hedgehogs, may carry *Salmonella*. These are not suitable pets for small children.