



# Salmonella infection

## What is *Salmonella* infection?

*Salmonella* infection (also known as salmonellosis) is an infection of the digestive tract (or gut), caused by *Salmonella* bacteria. There are thousands of *Salmonella* types and they are found in many domestic and wild animals.

## How do you get *Salmonella* infection?

*Salmonella* bacteria can infect both people and animals, and can also grow in food and the environment.

You become infected with *Salmonella* by ingesting the bacteria through your mouth. This can be by:

- eating contaminated, undercooked meat (most commonly chicken)
- eating contaminated raw or undercooked eggs
- eating food that has been cross-contaminated with *Salmonella* from raw foods (especially meats, poultry and eggs)
- handling pets, other animals, raw meat and pet meat
- drinking water that has been contaminated, usually by animals or sewage.

Person-to-person spread can happen if you come into contact with microscopic amounts of faeces (poo) from an ill person. Such

spread may occur directly by close personal contact, or indirectly by touching contaminated surfaces such as taps, toilet flush buttons, toys and nappies.

## Signs and symptoms

Symptoms usually start between 6 hours to 7 days (usually 1 to 3 days) after you have ingested the bacteria and typically last for between 2 to 7 days.

Symptoms can include:

- diarrhoea
- stomach cramps
- nausea and vomiting
- fever
- headache.

*Salmonella typhi* and *Salmonella paratyphi* are certain types of *Salmonella* bacteria that cause [typhoid and paratyphoid fever](#), which affect the whole body, not just the digestive tract.

## How do I know if I have *Salmonella* infection?

There are many causes of gastroenteritis, and laboratory testing of a faecal specimen is necessary to confirm that symptoms are due to *Salmonella* infection.

## Treatment of *Salmonella* infection

People with confirmed or suspected *Salmonella* infection should:

- Drink plenty of fluids such as water or oral rehydration drinks (available from pharmacies) to avoid dehydration. Dehydration is especially dangerous for babies and the elderly.



- Avoid anti-vomiting or anti-diarrhoeal medications unless prescribed or recommended by a doctor.

People with typhoid or paratyphoid fever will require antibiotic treatment.

If you experience severe or prolonged symptoms you should visit a doctor.

## While you have the infection

- Do not go to work or school for at least 24 hours after symptoms have finished, or 48 hours if you work in or attend a high risk setting, such as health care, residential care or child care, or handle food as part of your job.
- People with typhoid or paratyphoid fever who work in a high risk setting as described above will be contacted by their local public health unit to discuss extra precautions.
- Wash and dry your hands thoroughly after going to the toilet.
- Avoid preparing or handling food and drinks for other people in your household until at least 24 hours after your symptoms have finished. If you must prepare or handle food, thoroughly wash your hands beforehand to reduce the risk of spreading the infection to others.
- Immediately remove and wash using detergent and hot water any clothes or bedding contaminated with vomit or diarrhoea.
- After an episode of diarrhoea or vomiting, clean contaminated surfaces (for example benches, floors and toilets) immediately using detergent and hot water. Then disinfectant surfaces using a bleach-based product diluted according to manufacturer's instructions.

- Clean carpet or soft furnishings contaminated with diarrhoea or vomit immediately using detergent and hot water and then steam clean.

## How can *Salmonella* infection be prevented?

- Avoid contact with people who have gastroenteritis symptoms.
- Wash and dry your hands thoroughly after going to the toilet, handling animals, changing nappies or cleaning up vomit or diarrhoea, and before eating or drinking. If hand-washing facilities are not available use an alcohol-based gel.
- Raw meats, especially poultry, can contain *Salmonella* bacteria. Keep raw foods separate from cooked and ready-to-eat foods (for example salads) to prevent cross-contamination. Store raw meat below ready-to-eat food in the refrigerator and use separate chopping boards and knives for raw and ready-to-eat foods.
- Keep cold food below 5 °C and hot food above 60 °C.
- Cook meat and poultry thoroughly to a temperature of 75 °C or until meat juices run clear and are not pink.
- Do not use dirty or cracked eggs.

## When travelling

When travelling to developing countries, especially in Asia, the Pacific islands, Africa, the Middle East and Central and South America, you should avoid:

- salads and fresh fruit salads
- raw or cold seafood, including shellfish
- raw or runny eggs



- cold meat
- unpasteurised milk and dairy products (including ice-cream)
- ice in drinks and flavoured ice blocks.

Fruit that you peel yourself is usually safe. Remember – ‘cook it, boil it, peel it, or leave it’.

Use bottled water or disinfect water (by boiling, chemical treatment or purifiers) for drinking and brushing teeth.

Read more about [healthy international travel](#).

## Is there a vaccine for *Salmonella*?

There are no vaccines that protect against most types of *Salmonella*. However, a typhoid vaccine is available for overseas travellers and can provide some protection. See your doctor or travel medicine specialist at least 2 months prior to departure to see if any vaccinations or medications are recommended.

## Where to get help

- See your doctor.
- Visit a [GP after hours](#).
- Ring *healthdirect Australia* on 1800 022 222.

## Remember

Safe food preparation and thorough cooking, and washing your hands after contact with raw meats and animals can help prevent *Salmonella* infection.

---

**Acknowledgements**  
**Public Health**

---

This publication is provided for education and information purposes only. It is not a substitute for

professional medical care. Information about a therapy, service, product or treatment does not imply endorsement and is not intended to replace advice from your healthcare professional. Readers should note that over time currency and completeness of the information may change. All users should seek advice from a qualified healthcare professional for a diagnosis and answers to their medical questions.

## See also

- [Food safety tips](#)
- [Gastroenteritis](#)
- [Healthy international travel](#)

## Related sites

- [Healthdirect Australia \(external site\)](#)

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.

Produced by the Communications Directorate © Department of Health 2015

Copyright to this material is vested in the State of Western Australia unless otherwise indicated. Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part may be reproduced or re-used for any purposes whatsoever without written permission of the State of Western Australia.