



PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET

Boston Public Health Commission
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Salmonella

What is salmonella?

Salmonella is a bacteria that causes an intestinal illness in people and animals. There are many different kinds of salmonella bacteria that can cause illness.

How do people catch salmonella?

Salmonella is found in the intestinal tract of humans and other animals. People usually catch salmonella by eating contaminated food that was not cooked properly. Contaminated foods are often of animal origin such as eggs, egg products, meat, poultry and unpasteurized dairy products, but all foods can become contaminated. Food can also be contaminated by an infected person who does not wash their hands properly. Fortunately thorough cooking kills the bacteria. Animals such as pet chickens, dogs, cats and reptiles (such as turtles or iguanas) can also carry the salmonella bacteria.

What are the symptoms?

People exposed to the bacteria may experience stomach cramps, diarrhea (sometimes bloody), fever, nausea and sometimes vomiting. Symptoms usually begin 6 to 48 hours after the bacteria is swallowed.

How do you know if you have salmonella?

Your healthcare provider can send a stool sample to a laboratory. The laboratory will test the sample for salmonella bacteria.

How is the illness treated?

Most people will recover on their own or only require fluids to prevent dehydration. Antibiotics may be used to treat salmonella bacteria in people who are not able to fight off the illness on their own, such as the very young, the very old or those with weakened immune systems.

How can I prevent salmonella?

1. When preparing food treat raw eggs, poultry, beef, and pork as if they are contaminated and handle accordingly.
 - ✓ Wash your hands often.
 - ✓ Food surfaces including knives, cutting boards, counter tops and dishes used for preparation should be washed with soap and water immediately after use to prevent cross contamination.
 - ✓ Don't cross-contaminate. Make sure to keep raw foods, especially meat away from ready to eat food.
 - ✓ Refrigerate foods right away after eating
 - ✓ Set your refrigerator temperature at 40°F or colder and freezer at or below 0°F.
2. Avoid eating raw or undercooked eggs or undercooking foods which contain raw eggs. Avoid drinking or using raw (unpasteurized) milk.

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3. Carefully wash hands with soap and water

- ✓ Before food preparation
- ✓ After food preparation
- ✓ After toilet visits
- ✓ After handling pets

What if I have salmonella?

Most infected people may return to work or school once their diarrhea has resolved, provided they carefully wash their hands with soap and water after using the bathroom. Keep in mind it is possible to give the bacteria to other's even after feeling better. In order to protect the public, workers who handle food and health care workers must be cleared the local health department before returning to work.

**For more information, please contact
Boston Public Health Commission
Communicable Disease Control
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