

## What is Salmonella ?

Salmonella is a bacterium (germ) which can cause food poisoning and less commonly, infection in the bloodstream and other organs.

## Where does it come from?

Food is the commonest source of Salmonella for humans. Raw poultry and meat, raw eggs and unpasteurised dairy products may also be contaminated. An infected person is capable of excreting a large number of germs in the faeces. An increase in cases is often seen in late summer possibly due to the warmer weather leading to a more rapid growth of bacteria and greater consumption of undercooked food, e.g. barbecues.

## How does it spread?

Salmonella is acquired by eating undercooked, contaminated meat, especially poultry, as well as eggs or certain foods prepared with raw eggs.

It may be spread by cross contamination (this is due to raw meat coming into contact with food that does not require further cooking or by contamination of ready to eat food by an infected person).

It can also be transmitted from person to person, most commonly between children, if their personal hygiene is inadequate.

## What are the symptoms?

Symptoms associated with Salmonella usually present 6-72 hours after ingesting the bacteria. These include:

*Stomach pain*

*Headache*

*Diarrhoea*

*Nausea/vomiting*

*Fever*

*Joint pains (occasionally)*

Most individuals experience symptoms for up to 7 days. Healthy individuals tend to have less severe symptoms and may not even become ill. Infants, the elderly, and those with impaired immune systems may develop a more severe illness as the infection can spread from the bowel to other body sites via the blood stream.

A small number of people, especially young children, may carry this organism in their bowel after their symptoms have ceased. They should eventually get rid of the organism without any long-term ill effects.

## Can I prevent infection?

Adhering to the following advice can reduce the risk of contracting or spreading salmonella :

### 1. Always wash your hands.

Regular, thorough hand washing is essential and should be done:

Before :

- *Food handling & cooking*
- *Eating*
- *Feeding young children or the elderly*

and After :

- *Handling raw eggs or meat*
- *Using the toilet*
- *Handling pets*
- *Changing nappies*

### 2. Always ensure that food is thoroughly cooked. Adequate cooking destroys Salmonella.

### 3. Practise safe food preparation.

- Check 'use by' dates - use only food within the recommended period.

- Do not use the same chopping board for raw meat/fish and other foodstuffs.
  - Clean knives and utensils between use when preparing raw meat/fish and other foodstuffs.
  - Clean food preparation surfaces with detergent and hot water.
  - Prepare and store raw and cooked foods separately.
  - Store raw meat and poultry on the shelf below cooked foods to avoid drip contamination.
  - Defrost poultry, meat and other products thoroughly before cooking. These items should be cooked until the juices run clear and there are no pink bits inside.  
Always follow manufacturers instructions.
  - Once cooked, consume food immediately or cool rapidly and refrigerate or freeze.
  - Keep perishable products in the refrigerator operating below 5°C. Salmonella can multiply on food at room temperature.
  - If you re-heat food, make sure it is piping hot.
  - Wash salad items and other food to be eaten raw.
  - Exclude pests and pets from the kitchen as they can also carry salmonella.
- ### 4. Avoid eating raw eggs and unpasteurised dairy products.

Raw or undercooked eggs and other unpasteurised dairy products should be avoided. Be especially careful when ordering restaurant dishes that may be made with raw or undercooked eggs (e.g. Hollandaise sauce,

## Can I prevent infection?

*(continued from overleaf)*

Caesar salad dressing). It is often helpful to find out whether the restaurant uses pasteurised eggs when making these dishes, which is what their Environmental Health Departments advise them to do.

### **5. Avoid swimming pools until diarrhoea has ceased for 2 weeks.**

## Will I need treatment?

Generally speaking, people infected with Salmonella do not require medical treatment. If you do become infected, remember to drink plenty of fluids. Salmonella can cause the body to lose a large amount of water through diarrhoea and vomiting. Adequate fluid intake will replace the lost water and prevent dehydration.

If symptoms become severe, you should contact your GP for further advice.

## When can I return to work?

In order to reduce the risk of spreading infection, you should not return to work until you have been symptom free for 48 hours. Children who are not yet in school and persons who fail to demonstrate adequate hygiene for whatever reason may be considered for formal exclusion by the Public Health Protection Unit.

Informal exclusion may be advised by the health board in conjunction with the employer for food handlers within commercial premises.

# Salmonella

P A T I E N T I N F O R M A T I O N

*If you suspect you have contracted Salmonella you will need to provide a stool specimen to confirm this, in which case you should contact your General Practitioner (GP).*

*If you would simply like more information contact either your GP or the Public Health Protection Unit at Greater Glasgow & Clyde NHS Board.*

**Tel : 0141-201-4917**

