



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT *SALMONELLA*

WHAT IS *SALMONELLA*

Salmonella is a gram-negative, rod-shaped bacilli that can cause diarrheal illness in humans. The *Salmonella* family includes over 2,300 serotypes of bacteria which are one-celled organisms which are too small to be seen without a microscope. *Salmonella* is one of the most common causes of food poisoning. Two serotypes, *Salmonella* Enteritidis and *Salmonella* Typhimurium are the most common and account for half of all human infections. These microscopic living creatures are passed from the faeces of people or animals to other people or other animals.

WHAT IS SALMONELLOSIS AND ITS SYMPTOMS

Salmonellosis is an infection caused by the bacteria *Salmonella*. Usually, incubation period is between 12-72 hours and symptoms last 4-7 days. Generally, symptoms include diarrhea, fever, abdominal cramps and vomiting.

However, most people get better without treatment. But, *Salmonella* can cause more serious illness in older adults, infants, and persons with chronic diseases. There are two kinds of illness that *Salmonella* can cause;

- (1) Gastrointestinal illness, which causes nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, cramps, and fever, with symptoms generally lasting a couple of days and tapering off within a week. In otherwise healthy people, the symptoms usually go away by themselves, but long-term arthritis may develop.
- (2) Typhoidal illness which causes high fever, diarrhea or constipation, aches, headache, and lethargy (drowsiness or sluggishness), and, sometimes, a rash. It's a very serious condition; up to 10% of people who don't get treatment may die.

Salmonella is killed by cooking and pasteurization - *i.e.* the process of heat processing a liquid or a food to kill pathogenic bacteria to make the food safe to eat.

Strains of *salmonella* that cause no symptoms in animals can make people sick, and vice versa. If salmonella is present in food, it does not usually affect the taste, smell, or appearance of the food.

HOW *SALMONELLA* GETS INTO FOODS

Because the salmonella bacteria live in the intestinal tracts of infected animals (including birds) and humans, their faeces becomes a carrier of the bacteria if it gets into food or water. For example, if water used to irrigate a field has animal faeces in it, the water can contaminate the food growing in the field.



Contamination can also occur where food is being made. For instance, a tainted ingredient can get on equipment, floors, storage bins, or someone's hands and then spread to other food. In fact, a cutting board or knife that has the salmonella bacteria on it can contaminate other foods that can lead to food poisoning.

One reason why it's tough to reduce *Salmonella* infections is because the bacteria make its way into so many different types of foods. *Salmonella* can contaminate meats, poultry, eggs, fruits, vegetables, and even processed foods.

Food may also become contaminated by the unwashed hands of an infected food handler who might or might not be showing symptoms. *Salmonella* can also be found in the feces of some pets, especially those with diarrhea.

HOW ONE CAN GET SALMONELLOSIS

Salmonella is usually transmitted to humans by eating foods contaminated with animal faeces. *Salmonella* present on raw meat and poultry could survive if the product is not cooked to a safe minimum internal temperature, as measured with a food thermometer.

Salmonella can also cause foodborne illness (salmonellosis) through cross-contamination, e.g., when juices from raw meat or poultry come in contact with ready-to-eat foods, such as salads.

ALWAYS REMEMBER, YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT, SO LET'S MAKE FOOD SAFETY OUR LIFESTYLE AND COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY.