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Salmonellosis Facts



What is salmonella?

Salmonella is a bacteria that can cause food-borne infection called salmonellosis. Salmonella is found in the feces of domestic and wild animals, including poultry, wild birds, pigs, cattle, and rodents. Reptiles such as lizards, turtles and snakes, and pets such as dogs and cats may also carry the bacteria. Humans are carriers of certain types of salmonella. Salmonella can also be found on raw fruits and vegetables that have become contaminated, as well as contaminated water supplies or unpasteurized milk.

What causes salmonellosis?

Salmonella infection is spread by eating food contaminated by feces of an infected animal or person or by drinking contaminated water. It can also be spread from person-to-person.

What are the symptoms of salmonellosis?

Symptoms include sudden fever, headache, diarrhea, stomach cramps, nausea and sometimes vomiting. Symptoms can start 6 to 72 hours after becoming infected.

Who is most at risk for salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis can be serious in infants and young children, pregnant women and their unborn babies, and older adults. Also at risk are people with weakened immune systems, such as those with HIV/AIDS, cancer, diabetes, kidney disease, and transplant patients.

How is salmonellosis treated?

Usually, salmonellosis will go away on its own. It is important that anyone with diarrhea or vomiting drink lots of fluids. If the illness is severe, antibiotics may be used.

How can I reduce the risk of salmonellosis?

Wash your hands thoroughly before, during and after food preparation.

If you have diarrhea do not prepare food, care for hospitalized patients, the elderly or children.

Cook ground poultry and poultry pieces to a minimum temperature of 74°C (165°F). Whole poultry must be cooked to 82°C (180°F). Cook other ground meats to 71°C (160°F). Use a probe thermometer to check cooking temperatures.

Place cooked foods on clean surfaces to prevent recontamination.

Do not leave food at room temperature for longer than two hours.

Use only pasteurized milk and milk products.

Thoroughly cook eggs. Do not eat raw eggs or inadequately cooked eggs (over easy, or sunny side up, home made egg nog). Do not use an egg if it appears that the shell has been broken or damaged before you handle it.

Thoroughly wash fruits and vegetables before eating them.

When buying, preparing and storing food, keep raw meats separate from fruits, vegetables, cooked foods and ready-to-eat foods.

Always wash your hands after handling reptiles. Reptiles, including turtles, are not appropriate pets for children.

