



Salmonellosis

Reportable to local or state health department.

Consult the health department before posting or distributing the Parent/Guardian fact sheet.

Outbreaks of *Salmonella* infections are unusual in childcare and school settings, but can occur, especially in setting where children are in diapers or have contact with reptiles or farm animals.

School health and childcare provider information

Cause

Salmonella bacteria.

Symptoms

Diarrhea, stomach cramps, nausea, headache, fever, and sometimes vomiting. Infected persons may show mild symptoms or may not have any symptoms at all. Illness usually lasts 4 to 7 days. Some *Salmonella* strains may cause infection in urine, blood, bones, joints, or the nervous system.

Spread

Salmonella bacteria leave the body through the stool of an infected person and enter another person when hands, food, or objects (such as toys) contaminated with stool are placed in the mouth. Spread can occur when people do not wash their hands after using the toilet or changing diapers. Spread can also occur through contact with reptiles, farm animals, infected pets (usually puppies, kittens, or chicks).

Most outbreaks of salmonellosis are associated with eating undercooked or raw food items that are contaminated with feces, such as eggs, poultry, meat, unpasteurized milk, fruits, and vegetables.

Incubation

It takes 6 hours to 6 days from the time a person is exposed until symptoms start.

Contagious period

As long as *Salmonella* is present in the stool, a person may pass the bacteria on to other people. *Salmonella* can be present in stool for several weeks after symptoms have stopped.

Exclusion

Childcare: Until 24 hours after diarrhea has stopped. Children who have *Salmonella* in their stools, but who do not have symptoms, do not need to be excluded.

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School: None, unless the child is not feeling well and/or has diarrhea and needs to use the bathroom frequently. Exclusion may be necessary during outbreaks.

Anyone with *Salmonella* should not go in lakes, pools, splash pads, water parks, or hot tubs until after diarrhea has stopped.

Staff with *Salmonella* may be restricted from working in food service. Call your local health department to determine how these restrictions apply.

Diagnosis

Recommend parents/guardians call their health care provider if their child has symptoms of salmonellosis. There is a lab test to detect *Salmonella* in the stool.

Treatment

Antibiotic treatment is not usually given because it does not shorten the duration of diarrhea. Antibiotic therapy is recommended only for patients with severe illness or those at risk of severe disease or complications (including young infants). Fluid intake may be increased to prevent dehydration.

Prevention

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after using the toilet, changing diapers, and before preparing or eating food. **Thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.** Staff should closely monitor handwashing of all children after they have used the bathroom or have been diapered.
- Chicks, ducklings, reptiles (e.g., pet turtles, iguanas, snakes), and amphibians are potential sources of *Salmonella* for small children and are not recommended for childcare settings. Wash hands with soap and warm running water immediately after handling these pets or other animals.
- Clean and disinfect diapering area and potty chairs after each use. Clean and disinfect bathroom toilets, sinks, and toys at least daily and when soiled (see Section 2).
- Clean and sanitize mouth toys, objects, and surfaces at least daily and when soiled (see Section 2).
- Avoid swallowing water when in lakes, pools, splash pads, water parks, or hot tubs.
- Food Safety
 - Thoroughly cook all foods that come from animals, especially poultry. Make sure meat is cooked throughout (no longer pink) and any juices run clear.
 - Store all uncooked meat and poultry separately on a shelf lower than any other foods in the refrigerator.
 - Do not drink unpasteurized milk or unpasteurized juices.
 - Use pasteurized eggs and milk in foods that will not be cooked.
 - Wash and disinfect all cutting boards, countertops, knives, utensils, and dishes that were used for raw meat or poultry before using with already cooked foods and with uncooked foods, such as fruits and vegetables.

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- Always wash hands, cutting boards, countertops, utensils, and dishes between uncooked and cooked foods.
- Do not let children serve or prepare food for others in the childcare or school setting.
- Minimize self-service food items in the school cafeteria and classroom (e.g., salad bars, trays of fruit, trays of desserts, etc.).

For more information, call Hennepin County HSPHD-Epidemiology at (612) 543-5230 or call your local health department.

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