

Salmonella



What Is It?

Salmonella is a type of bacteria that is a common cause of diarrheal illness in the United States. These bacteria are often found in the digestive tract of a variety of animals as well as humans. Recently, there has been an overall increase in foodborne Salmonella infections in the United States.

What Are the Symptoms?

Persons with salmonella infections often experience fever, stomach cramps, nausea and vomiting in addition to diarrhea. Symptoms may remain for two weeks or more but are usually gone within a week. Salmonella illnesses can be very serious for very young children, older adults, or people with weakened immune systems.

Who Gets It and How?

Salmonella is present in the feces of ill and recently recovered persons, and infections may be spread from person to person. However, outbreaks in child care settings are rare and most persons are believed to have acquired their infections from contaminated food. Some foods, such as chicken, come from infected chickens while others, such as tomatoes and some vegetables, are contaminated during processing. Food handlers may also contaminate food if they are infected and do not practice good handwashing techniques after using the bathroom and before they handle food. Although it has been known that salmonella may be present in cracked eggs or unrefrigerated eggs, only recently has salmonella been found in uncooked whole eggs. Contaminated food does not usually look and smell bad. Salmonella bacteria are killed by cooking food thoroughly. In addition to foodborne sources, pets, especially animals such as turtles, lizards and birds, often carry salmonella. Salmonella was recently found in dog food and the CDC reports that it may be an under-recognized source of human infection, especially in young children, so children, especially infants, should not be allowed to handle dry pet food.

When Should Children and Staff with this Illness Be Excluded?

Each case of salmonella must be considered separately. A health care provider should be consulted. The decision will be based on whether the carrier is a child or staff member, on the type of strain of salmonella, and on the age of the child and risk of communicability. The decision to do a laboratory check for the carrier status of healthy child care attendees depends on the strain of salmonella being carried. It is common

policy to have three negative (normal) stool cultures before someone is clear of the infection and is no longer a carrier.

Where Should I Report It?

- Salmonella is a reportable disease in California. This means that ECE providers are required to report cases of Salmonella to their local health department and to Licensing.
- Notify all parents/guardians and staff if there is a case of salmonella in your program. Keep the identity of the infected child(ren) confidential. It is important that parents monitor their children for any symptoms.

How Can I Limit the Spread of Salmonella?

ECE providers need to be aware of good hygiene and food handling practices to prevent foodborne illness from occurring within their facility. Additionally:

- Make sure that children and staff wash their hands after handling animals and cleaning their cages or pens. Turtles, lizards and other reptiles should not be kept as pets in ECE programs.
- Limit the serving of snacks and treats prepared outside the facility and served for special occasions to those from commercial sources. Home-prepared snacks may not only be prepared under less than optimal circumstances and may be transported or stored under conditions that will allow bacteria to grow.
 - Do not serve children raw or undercooked eggs. Raw eggs may be in foods such as homemade salad dressings, mayonnaise and sauces, homemade ice cream, or raw cookie dough.
 - Poultry and meat should be stored in a refrigerator and well-cooked, not pink in the middle.
 - Children should not eat or drink raw or unpasteurized fruit juice or dairy products, including raw milk.
- Make sure that lunches brought from home are refrigerated when necessary. These include meals containing raw vegetables as well as those with meats. Dairy products and liquid formula should also be kept refrigerated in order to limit the growth of bacteria, including salmonella.

Resources

Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, May 16, 2008, Multistate Outbreak of Human Salmonella Infections Caused by Contaminated Dry Dog Food — United States, 2006-2007 available at www.cdc.gov/mmwrR/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5719a4.htm