

## **What is Salmonella?**

Salmonella is a large group of bacteria that may cause food poisoning and gastroenteritis (inflammation of the stomach and intestine). These bacteria are widely distributed in our food chain and environment.

## **How do I know if I have Salmonella?**

Diagnosis can only be confirmed by testing a sample of your faeces. This is usually at the request of your doctor.

## **How is it spread?**

Salmonella is often found in raw meat, eggs, and unpasteurised milk. It is spread by eating and drinking contaminated food or water or by contact with infected people who may still have diarrhoea. Many animals, such as cattle, poultry, rodents and domestic pets (particularly turtles and terrapins) carry the bacteria.

## **What are the symptoms?**

Diarrhoea, fever, stomach cramps and occasionally vomiting. The illness is rarely more serious but care should be taken with the very young or elderly.

## **How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?**

Symptoms usually appear within 12 to 48 hours and may last for several days.

## **How long is a person able to spread the bacteria?**

Most people will get rid of the bacteria completely within weeks. However some people may feel better within a few days but may still carry the bacteria in their gut and thus in their faeces for some months. Even though the person is showing no symptoms they may still spread the bacteria.

## **Do infected people need to stay away from work or school?**

All cases of gastroenteritis are regarded as potentially infectious. People should normally stay away from work or school until free from diarrhoea and vomiting. Inform your employer, child carer or school as soon as possible to help them identify if they may have an outbreak.

Anybody in a 'high risk' group needs to stay away long enough to allow the infection time to clear. This includes:

- food handlers involved with unwrapped or ready to eat food,
- staff of health care facilities in contact with food or patients,
- children aged below 5 years attending nurseries, playgroups, etc
- older children and adults who may find it difficult to implement good standards of personal hygiene

It is important to contact us if you, or anyone else in your household, are in one of these groups. People in these categories should not return to work, school or nursery until their symptoms have ceased and until their bowel habits have been normal for at least 48 hours. This is provided that they wash their hands thoroughly after using the toilet.

## **How can I prevent it spreading?**

Handwashing is the most important factor in preventing the spread of infection. Thoroughly wash your hands with soap in warm running water:

- AFTER using or cleaning the toilet
- AFTER touching anything contaminated by diarrhoea or vomiting
- AFTER attending to anybody who is unwell
- AFTER handling dirty laundry, clothing or bedding
- AFTER handling used nappies
- BEFORE handling, preparing, serving, or consuming food or drink

People who are ill should ideally use bactericidal liquid soap and separate towels or disposable paper tissues. A nailbrush can assist you to clean under your fingernails. Always dry your hands well as this helps to remove bacteria.

### **Cleaning the toilet**

For as long as people are unwell:

- wipe the toilet seat with disinfectant after each use
- wash and disinfect other items like bedpans or potties after each use.
- use a cloth soaked in disinfectant to wipe the toilet seat, flush handle, washbasin taps, and door handle two or three times a day.
- clean the toilet bowl using a (toilet) brush and disinfectant. Rinse the brush by flushing the toilet, and replace in its holder.
- keep any rubber gloves used for cleaning the toilet for this use only.
- flush the toilet with the seat and lid down.

### **Laundry**

- keep dirty laundry from anyone with food poisoning separate
- if possible remove any heavy soiling into the toilet before washing
- wash soiled clothing and bedding separately on as hot a washing programme as possible without exceeding fabric care instructions.

### **Points to remember**

- make sure everybody follows these precautions
- assist young children to wash their hands properly

### **REMEMBER TO WASH YOUR HANDS FREQUENTLY**

**Further advice is available by contacting your Doctor or from:**

Cambridge City Council  
Environmental Health & Waste Strategy  
Mandela House  
4 Regent Street  
Cambridge  
CB2 1BY

Tel: 01223 457900

Fax: 01223 457909



## **Cambridge City Council**

# **SALMONELLA**

## **YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED**