



# How to Treat Salmonella

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Reviewed

Three Parts: [Diagnosing Salmonella Poisoning](#) [Treating It](#) [Preventing Future Infections](#)

Salmonella poisoning most often results from coming into contact with water or food contaminated with the salmonella bacteria. It can cause fever, diarrhea and abdominal cramps, and is often referred to as food poisoning. Symptoms occur within 2 to 48 hours and can last up to 7 days. They usually go away on their own, but complications can arise on rare occasions. See Step 1 to learn how to treat salmonella poisoning and avoid it in the future.

Part  
1

## Diagnosing Salmonella Poisoning

**1 Identify the symptoms.** Salmonella infection is usually caused by eating raw eggs or meat products that are contaminated with the bacteria. There's an incubation period of a few hours to up to 2 days, followed by symptoms that can usually be classified as gastroenteritis, an inflammation of the stomach or intestines.<sup>[1]</sup> The most common symptoms of a salmonella infection are the following:

- Vomiting
- Nausea
- Diarrhea
- Chills
- Fever
- Headache
- Blood in the stool
- Very hot temperature
- Cold sweats
- Head cold
- Runny nose

**2 Know when to see the doctor.** While salmonella usually doesn't pose a high health risk, individuals with compromised immune systems, such as people with AIDS, sickle cell disease or inflammatory bowel diseases, are at an increased risk of complications from salmonella poisoning. Children and the elderly are also more likely to experience serious complications. If the symptoms don't seem to be ebbing, and the person experiencing them is in a higher-risk group, it's advisable to see a doctor as soon as possible. Immediate medical attention should also be sought if you or the person you're concerned about experiences the following:

- **Dehydration**, leading to decreased urine output, decreased tear production, dry mouth and sunken eyes.
- Signs of **bacteremia**, a condition in which the salmonella enters the bloodstream and infects body tissues in the brain, spinal cord, heart, or bone marrow. A sudden high fever, chills rapid heart rate and an appearance of serious illness are signs that this may be occurring.

**3 Get tested for salmonella infection.** The doctor will assess the your symptoms and in most cases advise getting plenty of fluids and resting until the symptoms pass, since they usually go away on their own. If the doctor determines a test is necessary, a stool sample will be tested to determine whether it contains salmonella.<sup>[2]</sup>

- The doctor may also decide to test a blood sample to determine whether bacteremia has occurred.
- The doctor may prescribe antibiotics if the salmonella infection has spread beyond the digestive system.
- If dehydration becomes severe enough, the patient may need to be admitted to the hospital to take fluids intravenously.

Part  
2

## Treating It

**1 Drink plenty of fluids, especially water.** Loss of fluids through vomiting and diarrhea creates the risk of dehydration. It is important to replace lost fluid and electrolytes by drinking water, herbal tea, juice, and broth. Even if it doesn't feel good to drink, this is the best way to keep up your body's energy and get past the worst of the symptoms.

- Try eating a popsicle, ice chips or some sorbet as a way to get both water and sugar into your system.
- Drink plenty of water especially after severe bouts of vomiting or diarrhea.
- Children can drink a rehydration solution like Pedialyte to restore fluids and electrolytes.

**2 Take an anti-diarrhea medication.** loperamide (Imodium A-D) can help to relieve the cramping associated with salmonella-related diarrhea. However, this medication can also prolong the diarrhea itself.<sup>[3]</sup>

**3 Eat bland food while recovering from a salmonella infection.** Eating salty or spicy foods can further aggravate your already-sensitive digestive system. Avoid rich fatty foods as well, which your digestive tract may find irritating.

**4 Use a heating pad or warm compress.** Lay it over your abdomen to help relieve any cramps you may be experiencing. A hot water bottle, or a hot bath, will also do the trick.

**5 Rest and give your body time to heal.** Overdoing it may increase your recovery time. Your body will naturally fight against the salmonella and it will recover more quickly if you do not put undue stress on it. Take a few days off of work or school if you're still experiencing diarrhea and vomiting.

Part  
3

## Preventing Future Infections

**1 Cook animal products thoroughly.** Don't eat or drink foods that have unpasteurized milk or raw eggs. This is the most common way people get infected with salmonella. Don't hesitate to send undercooked meat, poultry and eggs back to the kitchen when you're eating out.

- Salmonella is most commonly found in animal products, but vegetables may also get contaminated. Be sure to wash all your vegetables before cooking them.
- Wash your hands and work surfaces after they come into contact with raw poultry, meat or eggs.

**2 Wash your hands after handling animals and their feces.** This is another common way that salmonella is spread. Healthy reptiles and birds can carry salmonella on their bodies, and it's also present in cat and dog feces. Any time you handle an animal or its feces, be sure to wash your hands with soapy water.

**3 Don't allow children to handle reptiles and young birds.** Baby chicks, lizards and turtles, for instance, each carry salmonella on their faces. A child cuddling one of these animals could come into contact with salmonella. Since the infection is harder on a child's immune system than an adult's, it's best to forbid children from getting close to animals who could contaminate them.<sup>[4]</sup>

## Community Q&amp;A

**I'm a young teenager. Am I too young to be susceptible to salmonella?**



No, anyone can get salmonella. Children under five, the elderly, and people with immune deficiencies are more at risk of developing serious complications resulting from the illness.

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**Is it possible for salmonella to stay in your system for a year or longer?**



No. When salmonella bacteria is no longer present in the stool, all salmonella bacteria have left the body.

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**How long does the typical case of this food poisoning last?**

 Generally no longer than a week. If it lasts longer than that, you should go and see a doctor.

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**Can I still cook at home if I have salmonella?**

 It is recommended that you do not assist in food preparation until you have recovered and are no longer contagious. Bacteria can also be transmitted through liquids, so people carrying the virus should also avoid pouring water for others.

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**What foods should I eat to get my strength back after salmonella poisoning?**

 Eat hydrating foods such as fruits and vegetables. Drink plenty of water and energy drinks such as Gatorade and Powerade.

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**My stomach has been hurting for 3 days, is that a sign?**

 Stomach pain with diarrhea could be a sign. A stool test will have to be performed to give you an accurate diagnosis.

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**If I touch a turtle's shell, is there a good chance that I'll get salmonella?**

 If you thoroughly wash your hands afterwards and avoid going near any food or water until you have done so, you should be fine.

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**Can I go to school if I have salmonella?**

 It is best to stay at home and rest. Not only can you transfer the germs over to many other students, causing the whole school to get sick, but it would be really uncomfortable if you are throwing up and going to the toilet.

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**How long does it take to recover from salmonella?**

 Most people recover from salmonella within ten days of treatment. Without treatment, it can be deadly.

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**Is having a sore throat a sign of salmonella?**

 A sore throat is not necessarily a sign of salmonella, as is stomach pain, but salmonella can cause a sore throat because of the bacteria associated with it.

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**Tips**

- Wash your hands after using the rest room to decrease your chances of contracting or carrying salmonella bacteria.
- Preferably wear gloves whilst handling reptiles or amphibious creatures and/or their environment. Definitely wash hands thoroughly if unable to use gloves.
- Avoid the risk of salmonella poisoning by not eating undercooked or partially cooked meat, poultry or eggs and by thoroughly washing your hands after handling raw meat.
- Make sure to eat thoroughly cooked eggs, raw eggs can be the cause of Salmonella.
- Wash your hands, especially before eating and before and after touching raw meat.

## Warnings

- Once you have been infected with salmonella, you become a carrier and are contagious until you have completely gotten rid of the infection.
- Do not store fresh fruits and vegetables next to raw meat as the juice from the meat could contaminate the fruits or vegetables and increase the risk of salmonella bacteria transfer.
- Be careful of cross contamination from utensils used for handling raw meat and poultry and your food work area.

## Things You'll Need

- Water
- Anti-diarrhea Medication
- Heating Pad or Warm Compress
- Antibiotics

## Sources and Citations

1. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/salmonella/basics/definition/con-20029017>
2. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/salmonella/basics/tests-diagnosis/con-20029017>
3. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/salmonella/basics/treatment/con-20029017>

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