Salmonella

What is salmonellosis?
Salmonellosis is a type of food poisoning caused by the salmonella bacterium. There are many different kinds of these bacteria; Salmonella typhimurium and Salmonella enteritidis are the most common types in the United States.

Every year, approximately 40,000 cases of salmonellosis are reported in the U.S. Because many milder cases are not diagnosed or reported, the actual number of infections may be 30 or more times greater. Salmonellosis is more common in the summer than winter. Children are the most likely to get salmonellosis; young children, older adults, and people with impaired immune systems are the most likely to have severe infections.

What causes Salmonellosis?
You can get salmonellosis by eating food contaminated with salmonella. This can happen in the following ways:
Food may be contaminated during food processing or food handling.
Food may become contaminated by the unwashed hands of an infected food handler. A frequent cause is a food handler who does not wash his or her hands with soap after using the bathroom.
Salmonella may also be found in the feces of some pets, especially those with diarrhea. You can become infected if you do not wash your hands after contact with these feces.
Reptiles, baby chicks and ducklings, and small rodents such as hamsters are particularly likely to carry salmonella. You should always wash your hands immediately after handling one of these animals, even if the animal is healthy. Adults should also be careful that children wash their hands after handling reptiles, baby chicks or ducklings, or small rodents.

Beef, poultry, milk, and eggs are most often infected with salmonella. But vegetables may also be contaminated. Contaminated foods usually look and smell normal.

What are the symptoms?
Symptoms of salmonellosis include diarrhea, fever, and abdominal cramps. They develop 12 to 72 hours after infection, and the illness usually lasts 4 to 7 days. Most people recover without treatment. But diarrhea and dehydration may be so severe that it is necessary to go to the hospital. Older adults, infants, and those with impaired immune systems are at highest risk.

If you only have diarrhea, you usually recover completely, although it may be several months before your bowel habits are entirely normal. A small number of people who are infected with salmonellosis develop Reiter's syndrome, a disease that can last for months or years and can lead to chronic arthritis.

What are the symptoms?
Salmonellosis is diagnosed based on a medical history and a physical exam. Your health professional will ask you questions about your symptoms, foods you have recently eaten, and your work and home environments. A stool culture and blood tests may be done to confirm the diagnosis.

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Salmonella (cont.)

How is it treated?
You treat salmonellosis by managing any complications until it passes. Dehydration caused by diarrhea is the most common complication. Antibiotics are not usually needed unless the infection has spread.
To prevent dehydration, take frequent sips of a rehydration drink (such as Lytren, Pedialyte, or Rehydralyte). Try to drink a cup of water or rehydration drink for each large, loose stool you have. You can also use a sports drink, such as Gatorade. Soda and fruit juices have too much sugar and not enough of the important electrolytes that are lost during diarrhea, and they should not be used to rehydrate.
Try to stick to your normal diet as much as possible. Eating your usual diet will help you to get enough nutrition. Doctors believe that eating a normal diet will also help you feel better faster. But try to avoid foods that are high in fat and sugar. Also avoid spicy foods, alcohol, and coffee for 2 days after all symptoms have disappeared.

How is Salmonella prevented?
To prevent salmonellosis:
- Do not eat raw or undercooked eggs. Raw eggs may be used in some foods such as homemade hollandaise sauce, Caesar and other salad dressings, tiramisu, homemade ice cream, homemade mayonnaise, cookie dough, and frostings.
- Cook foods until they are well done. Use a meat thermometer to be sure foods are cooked to a safe temperature. Do not use the color of the meat (such as when it is no longer "pink") to tell you that it is done.
- Avoid raw or unpasteurized milk or other dairy products.
- Wash or peel produce before eating it.
- Avoid cross-contamination of food. Keep uncooked meats separate from produce, cooked foods, and ready-to-eat foods. Thoroughly wash hands, cutting boards, counters, knives, and other utensils after handling uncooked foods.
- Wash your hands before handling any food and between handling different food items.
- Do not prepare food or pour water for others when you have salmonellosis.
- Wash your hands after contact with animal feces. Since reptiles are particularly likely to carry salmonella bacteria, wash your hands immediately after handling them. Consider not having reptiles (including turtles) as pets, especially if you have small children or an infant.

Source: WebMD.com
How to keep foods safe

Raw foods from animals, such as eggs, meat and poultry, shellfish, and unpasteurized milk, are the foods most likely to be contaminated. Raw fruits and vegetables are of particular concern because washing decreases but does not eliminate contamination. But food poisoning usually can be prevented by handling food safely. The FDA (Food and Drug Administration) offers four simple steps for safely preparing food at home:

Clean and wash hands, countertops, and other surfaces often.
Bacteria can spread throughout the kitchen and get onto cutting boards, utensils, sponges, and countertops.

- Wash your hands with hot soapy water before and after handling food and after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and touching pets. Avoid preparing foods if you have diarrhea.
- Wash your cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and countertops with hot soapy water after preparing each food item and before you go on to the next food.
- Use plastic or other nonporous cutting boards. These boards should be run through the dishwasher -- or washed in hot soapy water -- after each use.
- Consider using paper towels to clean up kitchen surfaces. If you use cloth towels, wash them often in the hot cycle of your washing machine.

Separate and don't cross-contaminate.
This is especially true when handling raw meat, poultry, and seafood, so keep these foods and their juices away from ready-to-eat foods.

- Separate raw meat, poultry, and seafood from other foods in your grocery shopping cart and in your refrigerator.
- If possible, use a different cutting board for raw meat products.
- Always wash hands, cutting boards, dishes, and utensils with hot soapy water after they come in contact with raw meat, poultry, or seafood.
- Never place cooked food on a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, or seafood.

Refrigerate food promptly.
Refrigerate foods quickly because cold temperatures keep harmful bacteria from growing and multiplying. Set your refrigerator no warmer than 40 degrees Fahrenheit and the freezer no warmer than 0 degrees Fahrenheit. Check these temperatures occasionally with an appliance thermometer.

- Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared food, and leftovers within two hours.
- Never defrost food at room temperature. Thaw food in the refrigerator, under cold running water, or in the microwave. Marinate foods in the refrigerator.
- Divide large amounts of leftovers into small, shallow containers for quick cooling in the refrigerator. Don't pack the refrigerator full. Cool air must circulate to keep food safe.

Source: webmd.com
How healthy is your Home?

- **Fridge:** Freshen up your fridge; do not take a chance on that carton of left over Chinese takeout. Toss any food that you have the slightest question about.
- **Breathe easier.** If your stove does not have a hood, crack a window to let the smoke, gas, and humidity out.
- **Use ceramic ovenware, cast iron, or stainless steel cook ware.**
- **Phosphates in some detergents can contribute to water pollution when they go down the drain.**
- **Conventional cleaners can contain toxic chemicals that are not listed on the label. Natural ingredients work just as well to get rid of germs. Stay away from harsh solvents, fragrances, and/or ammonia.**
- **Plastics can leach chemicals into food, especially if they are heated or worn.** If you do use plastic, look for those numbered #1 PETE, #2 HDPE, #4 LDPE, and #5 PP which may be less toxic; or opt for glass or stainless steel.
- **When using the microwave, cook fast and safely. Use a glass lid or paper towel instead of plastic wrap.**

Source: health.com

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**Portion Control**

Since we live in a Hispanic community laden with Diabetes Type 2 prevalence, it behooves us to know about Type 2 Diabetes, its causes, and its management. One of the main controllable factors is portion control and size when it comes to food and diet. Here are tips for controlling portion sizes:

- **Measure and weigh food. We need to be smart about the portions.**
- **Know the difference between a serving size and a portion size:** Serving sizes are listed on nutritional labels. For example, a small bag of pretzels may indicate that it contains two serving sizes, so if your portion size is the whole bag, you’d have to double the calorie, carbohydrate, and fat information per serving to know how much you have taken in.
- **Eat desserts in moderation.**
- **Use portion-control dishes:** Ration the plate and divide it in quarters; each quarter is filled with one refined carbohydrate such as rice, one quarter with complex carbohydrate such as vegetables, one piece of meat and another quarter for a salad.
- **Develop good eating habits:** Fill up your plate with green veggies, and get full on those before eating other food.
- **Have a plan for what you eat including snacks.** Write down what you eat, think before you eat, and eat slowly.
- **Eat in a consistent manner.** Do not stay without food for more than five hours.

Source: health.com