



**COUNTY OF ORANGE
HEALTH CARE AGENCY**

**PUBLIC HEALTH
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***Salmonella* Frequently Asked Questions**

modified from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website
<https://www.cdc.gov/salmonella>, last accessed 12/21/2018

What is *Salmonella*?

Salmonella is a bacteria (germ) that causes illness with diarrhea, fever and/or stomach cramps.

How common is *Salmonella* infection?

According to the CDC, approximately 1.2 million illnesses and 450 deaths occur due to *Salmonella* annually in the United States, not including a specific type of *Salmonella* that causes typhoid disease and is discussed elsewhere (see [Typhoid](#)). In Orange County, there are approximately 350-500 *Salmonella* cases reported each year.



Photo Source CDC:

https://www.cdc.gov/salmonella/images/flexslider/salmonella_750px.jpg

What are the symptoms of *Salmonella*?

Most people infected with *Salmonella* develop symptoms 12 to 72 hours after exposure. Diarrhea, fever, and stomach cramps may be severe or mild; some people may not have any symptoms. The illness usually lasts 4 to 7 days, and most individuals recover completely without treatment. However, it may be several months before bowel habits are entirely normal. Some people with severe diarrhea can get dehydrated. The *Salmonella* bacteria can occasionally spread from the intestines to the bloodstream, and then to other body sites.

Who is at highest risk for *Salmonella* infection?

Children are at the highest risk to get *Salmonella* infection. Young children, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems are the most likely to have severe infections.

How are *Salmonella* infections diagnosed?

Diagnosing *Salmonella* infection requires testing a clinical specimen (such as stool or blood) from an infected person to distinguish it from other illnesses that can cause diarrhea, fever, and stomach cramps.

How are *Salmonella* infections treated?

Salmonella infections causing stomach cramps and diarrhea usually get better on their own in 5 to 7 days. Most do not require treatment other than oral fluids. People with severe diarrhea may require rehydration with intravenous fluids. Hospitalization is usually necessary for persons who *Salmonella* infection of the bloodstream.

Antibiotics are NOT recommended except in patients who:

- Have a serious illness (such as severe diarrhea, high fever, bloodstream infection, or condition requiring hospitalization).
- Are considered at high risk for serious disease or complications (such as infants, adults over 65 years old, and people with weakened immune systems).

How can I decrease the risk of getting infected with *Salmonella*?

There is no vaccine to prevent salmonellosis. Because foods of animal origin may be contaminated with *Salmonella*, people should cook poultry, meat and eggs thoroughly. In addition, people should wash their hands after contact with certain animals that are likely to be contaminated such as reptiles (including turtles, iguanas, and snakes), chicks and young birds. Households with children less than 5 years of age, adults over 65 years of age, or people with weakened immune systems should avoid having reptiles as pets.

Handwashing after using the bathroom and before handling food or drink also helps prevent the spread of *Salmonella*. People who have *Salmonella* infection should not



prepare or handle food or drink for others until their diarrhea has resolved. Orange County Public Health requires that food service (e.g., restaurant) workers, and people in certain other occupations such as health care or child care, who have *Salmonella* infection have stool testing to show that they are no longer carrying the *Salmonella* bacterium before they return to work.

Photo Source CDC:

<https://www.cdc.gov/salmonella/images/flexslider/small-turtles-750x350.jpg>