

Salmonella

What is *Salmonella*?

Salmonella is a bacterium found in the digestive system of wildlife (wild birds, rodents, turtles, etc.), farm animals (poultry, swine, cattle), and humans. There are over 2700 different types of *Salmonella* bacteria. *Salmonella* can live in the digestive system of some animals and even in some humans without causing illness.

How can you come in contact with *Salmonella*?

Human infections with *Salmonella* have been linked to contaminated water and foods such as: poultry, eggs, pork, beef, fresh vegetables, sprouted seeds, peanut butter, almonds and chocolate. In addition, contact with animals (including pets) or manure are other ways in which *Salmonella* may be transmitted. The bacterium may also be transmitted between people. So, hand washing plays an important role in stopping the transmission of *Salmonella*.

What are the symptoms if you become ill?

The illness that may develop if you ingest the *Salmonella* bacteria, is called salmonellosis. Symptoms of salmonellosis include diarrhea, fever, abdominal cramps and vomiting, usually lasting 4-7 days. The risk of salmonellosis is greatest for young children, the elderly, pregnant women, and anyone with ill health. However, everyone needs to guard against *Salmonella*.

What is the meat industry doing to control *Salmonella* in food?

The industry has implemented an internationally recognized system known as HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point) to control *Salmonella* and other foodborne bacteria. Through HACCP, it is possible to identify potential food safety hazards and monitor the most important production steps (critical points) to ensure these hazards are controlled before the product is sent to the grocery store. HACCP works well in controlling all foodborne bacteria, including *Salmonella*.

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What can consumers do to prevent foodborne illness?

There are important ways that consumers can safeguard their health through proper hygiene, effective food preparation and proper cooking methods.

Here are four simple messages for safe food handling:

CLEAN

Wash hands and surfaces often

- ✓ Wash hands often with soap and water before handling food—be especially vigilant after using the washroom, changing diapers, or handling animals.
- ✓ Always wash hands very well after handling raw meat, poultry, eggs or fish.
- ✓ Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils and countertops with hot soapy water after preparing each food item and before you go on to the next food .
- ✓ Wash all vegetables and fruit very well. Risks are reduced if vegetables are cooked.
- ✓ Do not handle food if suffering from diarrhea. If anyone in your household has diarrhea, do not share cutlery or dishes. Towels and bedding should be washed separately in hot water and bleach.

CHILL

Refrigerate food products promptly.

- ✓ Keep meat, poultry and eggs in the refrigerator.
- ✓ Thaw meat in the refrigerator, not at room temperature.
- ✓ Refrigerate leftovers within two hours.
- ✓ Foods should be kept at 4°C (40°F) or below. Use a fridge thermometer to check the temperature in your fridge.

COOK

Cook to proper temperature.

- ✓ A handy chart showing proper cooking temperatures for many foods can be accessed at <http://www.befoodsafe.ca/en-temperature.asp>. Ground beef must be cooked to 71C (160F). To know when burgers are done, check patty temperature with a proper thermometer (a digital instant/rapid-read thermometer is recommended). Research shows the colour of cooked ground beef can vary – beef burger patties may be brown in the centre before being cooked to a safe temperature.
- ✓ Never eat raw meat.
- ✓ Drink only water from a source that is known to be safe. Never drink untreated surface water (i.e. from lakes or streams).

SEPARATE

Don't cross-contaminate.

- ✓ Do not re-use knives, cutting boards, plates, etc. that have been in contact with raw meat, poultry or eggs until they have been thoroughly cleaned. Don't place cooked meat on the plate or tray you used to carry the raw meat.
- ✓ Take care that the juices and marinades from meat and poultry do not drip onto other foods.
- ✓ Before marinating meat, set aside some marinade to be used for basting.

Visit www.befoodsafe.ca for more information on safe food handling.