

HEALTH ALERT

Office of Developmental Programs

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Office of the Medical Director

SALMONELLA

Recent news reports noted an increase in infections with Salmonella. The Salmonella causing these infections has been found in eggs produced in Iowa. These eggs have been sold all over the United States including in Pennsylvania. About 1200 people have gotten sick from eating these eggs. The eggs have been recalled, but many of them have already been eaten. What is important to know about this?

What is Salmonella?

Salmonella is a bacteria that is found in many kinds of animals including chickens. It generally infects the intestines. Hens that are infected will infect some of their eggs. Eating infected eggs can cause infection.

What are the signs and symptoms of Salmonella?

Salmonella usually causes GI symptoms including diarrhea and vomiting. People can also have fever with Salmonella. Once infected the symptoms start in about 24 to 72 hours (1 to 3 days). They can last for 5 to 7 days. Most healthy people do not get very sick and don't need any treatment. Sometimes people will get dehydrated and need to be in the hospital. Rarely Salmonella will infect the bloodstream causing sepsis. This more commonly occurs in people with weak immune systems including those with AIDS and very young and very old people. Only people with severe infections need to be treated with antibiotics.

How do I prevent getting Salmonella?

- Don't eat raw eggs
- Thoroughly cook food
 - Meat should not be pink in the middle
 - Eggs should have firm white and yolk
- Don't make or eat sauces like Hollandaise, salad dressings like Caesar or homemade mayonnaise, or ice cream that are made from raw eggs. Instead use pasteurized (sterilized) egg products to make these.
- Don't eat raw dough that contains eggs like chocolate chip cookie dough or cake batter.

How do I prevent spreading Salmonella?

- Wash your hands, utensils, and food preparation surfaces like countertops while preparing raw foods like chicken or items with raw eggs in them.
- Keep eggs and other potential sources of Salmonella cold when storing.
- Discard broken or dirty eggs.
- If you contact Salmonella, then wash your hands frequently.

What if I bought eggs that were recalled?

If you have eggs that were recalled, then don't eat or use them. Either discard them or return them to the store where you got them.

What do I do if I think that I got Salmonella?

Call your health care practitioner if you have any of the symptoms of Salmonella. Generally Salmonella doesn't need to be treated and people get better on their own. However, some people have health conditions and might need to be monitored more closely for complications.

Where can I get more information?

There are a number of places to find additional information about Salmonella. Below are two websites that have information.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<http://www.cdc.gov/salmonella/enteritidis/>

Pennsylvania Department of Health:

http://www.portal.health.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/salmonella/14230/salmonella_infections_2008/558346