What is Salmonellosis?
Salmonellosis is an infection of the bowel caused by the bacteria *Salmonella*. It is usually diagnosed by growing the bacteria from a faecal specimen sent to a laboratory. Sometimes it may be grown from blood or another part of the body.

What are the symptoms?
Symptoms can include diarrhoea (sometimes with blood or mucus), stomach cramps, fever, nausea and vomiting. Symptoms usually develop six to 72 hours after becoming infected, but more commonly between 24-36 hours.

In most people symptoms usually last a few days to one week. Sometimes it may be several months before bowel habits return completely to normal.

Usually the infection occurs in the bowel, but occasionally it may spread to blood or other parts of the body. This can be serious and require hospitalisation.

Severe disease most commonly occurs in children, the elderly and those with impaired immune systems.

How it is treated
People usually recover from salmonellosis within a few days and without antibiotic treatment. Antibiotics are sometimes prescribed for those prone to severe illness.

Anyone with diarrhoea should drink extra fluid to avoid dehydration. Consider taking children with diarrhoea who refuse extra fluids to a doctor. Anyone with prolonged or severe diarrhoea or symptoms causing them concern should see a doctor.

Medicines to prevent vomiting or diarrhoea should not be given (especially in children) except when specifically prescribed by a doctor.

How it is spread
*Salmonella* can be found in the bowels of many animals (including birds) and often may not make the animal ill. Infection in people usually results from eating food contaminated with the *Salmonella* bacteria. Contamination can occur from an animal carrying the *Salmonella* bacteria or from an environment contaminated by animal faeces. Higher risk foods include raw or undercooked meat, poultry, eggs and unpasteurised milk. Occasionally fruit and vegetables have been contaminated with *Salmonella*. 
People infected with the *Salmonella* bacteria can infect others while the bacteria remain in their faeces. They may carry the bacteria for several weeks and people can still spread the infection even though they appear well. Children not toilet trained who carry the bacteria are an important source of infection to parents and within childcare settings.

**How it is prevented**

Prevention measures for salmonellosis include:

- cooking all meats and eggs thoroughly before eating
- avoiding using cracked or dirty eggs
- not consuming raw or unpasteurised milk or other dairy products
- washing hands, kitchen work surfaces and utensils with warm soapy water after they have been in contact with raw meat or poultry
- not changing nappies on tables or counters where food is prepared or eaten
- cleaning books, toys, equipment, furnishings, floors and toilets regularly (including toilet door handles).

Good hygiene is the best way to prevent further spread of salmonellosis. Hands should be washed with warm soapy water:

- after going to the toilet
- before preparing or handling food
- after handling raw meat or poultry
- after changing nappies
- after changing soiled linen
- after touching animals, reptiles, birds or other pets.

People with diarrhoea should not prepare or handle food that will be eaten by others.

**How it is controlled**

Children in childcare or school should not attend until they have not had a loose bowel motion for 24 hours.

Anyone with diarrhoea should not swim, wade or paddle in public pools

People with diarrhoea involved in food preparation or care for others in hospitals, aged care facilities or childcare should not work while they are ill. After recovery from salmonellosis, it is important to maintain good hygiene and hand washing practices.

Public Health is interested in preventing outbreaks of diarrhoea. If there are two or more cases in a hospital, childcare centre, aged care facility or other institution these should be reported to Public Health.

**For more information contact the Public Health Hotline on 1800 671 738**