

# Salmonella

---

This sheet is about exposure to **Salmonella** in a pregnancy or while breastfeeding. This information should not take the place of medical care and advice from your healthcare provider.

## **What is Salmonella?**

**Salmonella** is a bacterium. There are many different types of **Salmonella** bacteria that can cause someone to get sick. People who have weakened immune systems, along with young children and older adults, are more likely to get sick from **Salmonella**.

Symptoms of a **Salmonella** infection can include diarrhea, fever, and stomach cramping. These symptoms typically appear 12 to 72 hours after being infected. People who get a **Salmonella** infection could feel sick for 4 to 7 days. An infection may be serious enough to need treatment in a hospital. There is no vaccination that will prevent a **Salmonella** infection.

## **How do people get infected with Salmonella?**

Foods are most often the source of a **Salmonella** infection. To lower your chance of getting a **Salmonella** infection, it is important to fully cook eggs and meat before eating. Raw fruits and vegetables, as well as unpasteurized milk and dairy products, can also be a source of **Salmonella**. Fruits and vegetables should be well-washed whether cooked or eaten raw. Avoid drinking unpasteurized milk (also called raw milk) or eating any foods made with unpasteurized milk. Products contaminated by **Salmonella** are listed on several websites including <https://www.cdc.gov/salmonella/index.html> and <https://www.fda.gov/Safety/Recalls/default.htm>.

Handling or coming into contact with animals such as amphibians, reptiles, and birds is another way **Salmonella** bacterium is spread to humans. These animals also leave behind the bacteria that can potentially infect humans who clean their aquariums or terrariums. The infectious bacteria can be found on healthy animals and does not usually make the animals sick. Thoroughly wash your hands after handling these animals. Proper handling of animals and their living spaces will greatly lower your chance of becoming infected with **Salmonella**. Information on animals that carry **Salmonella** bacteria can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/diseases/salmonella.html>

## **I have Salmonella. Can it make it harder for me to get pregnant?**

It is not known if a **Salmonella** infection can make it harder to get pregnant.

## **Does having/getting Salmonella during pregnancy increase the chance for miscarriage?**

Miscarriage is common and can occur in any pregnancy for many different reasons. Based on the studies reviewed, having a **Salmonella** infection may increase the chance for miscarriage. There are case reports of **Salmonella** bacteria causing an infection of the amniotic fluid (the fluid that surrounds the fetus during pregnancy). While rare, this can lead to miscarriage.

## **Does having/getting Salmonella increase the chance of birth defects?**

Every pregnancy starts out with a 3-5% chance of having a birth defect. This is called the background risk. Based on the studies reviewed, it is not known if **Salmonella** increases the chance for birth defects above the background risk. The available data does not suggest an increased chance of birth defects due to **Salmonella** infection.

## **Would having/getting Salmonella in pregnancy increase the chance of other pregnancy-related problems?**

Based on the studies reviewed, **Salmonella** may increase the chance for preterm delivery (birth before week 37) or low birth weight (weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces [2500 grams] at birth).

In about 4% of cases (4 in 100), **Salmonella** can cause bacteremia, a condition where there are bacteria in the bloodstream that can lead to fetal loss.

## **Does having/getting Salmonella affect future behavior or learning for the child?**

Studies have not been done to see if **Salmonella** can cause behavior or learning issues for the child.

Though rare, **Salmonella** infection can be passed from the person who is pregnant to the fetus during pregnancy. Babies born with **Salmonella** infection can have sepsis (a blood infection) or develop meningitis. Meningitis is a condition where there are areas of swelling around the brain and spinal cord in the baby. If not treated promptly, the effects of meningitis can lead to long-term problems for some children.

***Breastfeeding while I have a Salmonella infection:***

In most cases, breastfeeding does not need to stop if the person who is breastfeeding has **Salmonella**. There is a report suggesting that **Salmonella** may have been passed from a person who was breastfeeding to the nursing child. If you have or are being treated for a **Salmonella** infection, talk to your healthcare provider and your child's pediatrician. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all of your breastfeeding questions.

***If a male has a Salmonella infection, could it affect fertility (ability to get partner pregnant) or increase the chance of birth defects?***

Studies have not been done to see if **Salmonella** could affect male fertility or increase the chance of birth defects above the background risk. **Salmonella** infection can be passed from person to person. If infected, wash your hands thoroughly and often to help lower the chance of passing a **Salmonella** infection to others. If your partner has a **Salmonella** infection, talk with your healthcare provider. For more information on paternal exposures, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet at <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/paternal-exposures-pregnancy/>.

**Please click here for references.**

**Questions? Call 866.626.6847 | Text 855.999.3525 | Email or Chat at [MotherToBaby.org](https://mothertobaby.org).**

---

Disclaimer: MotherToBaby Fact Sheets are meant for general information purposes and should not replace the advice of your health care provider. MotherToBaby is a service of the non-profit Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS). *OTIS/MotherToBaby encourages inclusive and person-centered language. While our name still contains a reference to mothers, we are updating our resources with more inclusive terms. Use of the term mother or maternal refers to a person who is pregnant. Use of the term father or paternal refers to a person who contributes sperm.* Copyright by OTIS, August 1, 2022.