



Live Poultry and *Salmonella*

Salmonellosis is most commonly associated with consumption of raw or undercooked food. However, did you know that live poultry, particularly chicks, ducklings, or other fowl can carry *Salmonella*, the bacteria that cause Salmonellosis? Children under the age of 5 years, older adults and those with weakened immune systems are at a higher risk for more severe infections. Special considerations should be made before buying live poultry.

What is *Salmonella*?

Salmonella is the bacterium that causes Salmonellosis. Hundreds of people become infected with *Salmonella* associated with live poultry contact annually. It is one cause of diarrheal illness, which generally affects the intestines, and occasionally the bloodstream.

How do people get *Salmonella* infections from live baby poultry?

Live poultry may have *Salmonella* on their bodies, even when they appear healthy and look clean. Anything they touch can be contaminated. The germs can get on cages, coops, hay and other things the birds touch. Additionally, *Salmonella* can be found on the hand, clothing, and shoes of bird handlers and others in contact with the bird's environment. People become infected with *Salmonella* by hand to mouth contact. Usually, this happens when people handle live poultry or their droppings and then accidentally touch their mouths or forget to wash their hands before eating or drinking. It is important to thoroughly wash your hands immediately after contact because the germs can easily spread to other people or things.

What are the signs, symptoms, and types of treatment available for *Salmonella* infections?

Salmonella can cause diarrhea, vomiting, stomach cramps and fever. Most people develop symptoms 1 to 3 days after exposure. The illness usually lasts 4 to 7 days and most people recover without treatment. If you or any of your family members develop diarrhea, fever or other signs of illness after contact with live poultry, contact a physician and make sure you inform him or her of your live poultry exposure. Infants, older adults, and those with weakened immune systems can become very ill and may require hospitalization.

Who is especially at risk for getting sick?

Children under 5 years old, older adults or those with weakened immune systems are at higher risk for developing severe illness due to *Salmonella* and may require hospitalization.

How do I reduce the risk of a *Salmonella* infection from live poultry?

- Young poultry are not good pets for children under 5 years old, older adults, or those with weakened immune systems
- Supervise children when handling poultry
 - Do not snuggle or kiss the birds
 - Do not touch your mouth or eat or drink around live poultry
- Wash hands with soap and water after handling live poultry or anything it contacts

- If soap and water is not available, use hand sanitizer
- Adults should supervise hand washing for young children
- When cleaning the live poultry's habitat:
 - Wear gloves and do not clean the habitat in or near any areas used for food or drink preparation
 - If possible, clean the habitat outside of the house and in an area that is not frequently accessed by children, elderly or immunocompromised people.
 - Do not clean the habitat near any sources of food (such as gardens or crop fields) or drinking water
 - After cleaning the habitat, remove and discard the gloves and thoroughly wash your hands.
 - Children less than 5 years old should not be allowed to clean the habitat.
- Do not allow live poultry to roam freely throughout your house
 - It is especially important to keep them out of food and drink preparation areas.
- Do not bathe live poultry in your kitchen sink or near any areas used for food or drink preparation. If you use a bathtub for this purpose, it should be thoroughly cleaned and bleached afterward to kill any bacteria that may remain on the surface.

Are there any restrictions about owning live poultry?

In the state of New Jersey, a person who shall sell or offer for sale, barter, or give away living baby chicks, ducklings, or other fowl under two months of age, for use as household or domestic pets is considered guilty of performing an act constituting cruelty.

Additional Resources:

Keeping Backyard Poultry: <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/SalmonellaPoultry/>

Risk of Human *Salmonella* Infections from Live Baby Poultry:
<http://cdc.gov/features/salmonellababybirds/>

Peep, chirp, quack! What you should know about *Salmonella* if you keep backyard poultry:
http://www.cdc.gov/media/matte/2011/07_salmonellapoultry.pdf

CDC Blog: Thinking about keeping live poultry?:
<http://blogs.cdc.gov/publichealthmatters/2010/10/thinking-about-keeping-live-poultry/>

CDC Digital Press Kit: Multiple Multistate Outbreaks of Human *Salmonella* Infections Linked to Live Poultry in Backyard Flocks: <http://www.cdc.gov/media/dpk/2013/dpk-live-poultry-salmonella.html#related>

CDC *Salmonella* Information: <http://www.cdc.gov/salmonella>

USDA Biosecurity for Birds: <http://healthybirds.aphis.usda.gov>