Salmonella infection

Information for patients

This leaflet is available in other formats including large print, audio tape, CD and braille, and in languages other than English, upon request.

This leaflet tells you about the salmonella infection which is causing your diarrhoea.

What is salmonella?

Salmonella is a bacterium (germ) which causes food poisoning.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms include:

- stomach pain
- headaches
- vomiting (being sick)
- diarrhoea
- tiredness
- fever (high temperature).

How will I know if I have this infection?

Your doctor will ask for a sample of your diarrhoea, which will be tested in the laboratory. The results of the test will show if you have salmonella.

How did I catch salmonella?

You may catch salmonella:

- by eating food that has been infected (in contact) with the germ, for example, undercooked poultry and eggs, unpasteurised milk and raw meat
- from someone who is infected.

It is likely you have had the germ for 12 - 72 hours before feeling ill.

Can I give it to someone else?

Yes, but this does not happen very often. The most important thing you can do to prevent this is to wash your hands well, using soap and water.
Is there any treatment?

You should:

- drink plenty of fluids so you do not become dehydrated (lack fluid in your body)
- avoid alcohol, tea, coffee and fizzy drinks
- take a painkiller such as paracetamol if you have any pain. Always follow the instructions provided in the leaflet supplied with your tablets.

Most people get better without treatment, but your doctor will give you antibiotics, if needed.

If you are in hospital you will usually be cared for in a single room and staff looking after you will wear aprons and gloves.

If you are taking the contraceptive pill and you have severe vomiting or diarrhoea you will need to take extra precautions. Ask your doctor if you need any advice.

If you have salmonella your doctor will have to notify the Environmental Health Officer.

Can I go to work or school?

You should stay off work or school until you have had no diarrhoea or vomiting for 2 days and feel well.

You must tell your employer you have had salmonella infection if you work with the elderly, children, those in poor health or if you handle food. An environmental health officer may visit or telephone you to talk about your illness.

How can salmonella be prevented?

You can reduce the chance of catching salmonella by:

- washing your hands well and often, especially after going to the toilet or changing nappies
- washing your hands before preparing or eating food
- washing and drying your hands carefully after handling raw meat and poultry
- keeping raw food at the bottom of the fridge away from cooked food
- using hot water and detergent when washing up and cleaning chopping boards
- making sure meat and poultry are properly cooked especially at barbeques
- washing your hands after contact with animals especially reptiles and amphibians (such as snakes and lizards)
- taking extra care when eating or drinking when travelling abroad.

You should not prepare food for anyone else if you have sickness and diarrhoea.
Do I need to do any special cleaning?

It is important the toilet area is cleaned after use. This should include flush handles, door handles and taps.

Wash all dirty clothes, bedding and towels on the hottest cycle possible.

Contact numbers

If you have any questions or worries please talk to your GP or nurse or you can contact a member of the hospital Infection Prevention and Control Team on:

telephone: 01642 383280
Monday - Friday, 9.00am - 5.00pm

Further information is available from:

NHS Direct 24 hour helpline 0845 4647
or via the website at www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

Environmental Health Departments

Stockton Borough Council
telephone: 01642 526575 / 526576

Hartlepool Borough Council
telephone: 01429 266522

Durham City Council
telephone: 0191 3018470

Information used in the development of this leaflet:

This leaflet has been produced in partnership with patients and carers. All patient leaflets are regularly reviewed, and any suggestions you have as to how it may be improved are extremely valuable. Please write to the Quality Assurance Team, University Hospital of North Tees or email: patientinformation@nth.nhs.uk.

Comments or complaints
We are continually trying to improve the services we provide. Please let us know about things we are doing well, or if you have any suggestions about how services can be improved. Our Patient Advisory Liaison Service (PALS) is here to try to deal with any problems on the spot and give information about local services. If you would like to contact or request a copy of our PALS leaflet please contact:

University Hospital of North Tees
telephone: 01642 624719 or 0800 092 0084
University Hospital of Hartlepool
telephone: 01429 522874 or 0800 015 3031

If you are unhappy with any aspect of your care, please speak to any member of staff, PALS, the Patient Relations Department or write to the Chief Executive. If you would like a copy of our complaints leaflet please contact the Trust Patient Relations Department on:

telephone: 01642 624098

Data Protection and use of patient information
The Trust has developed a Data Protection Policy in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. All of our staff respect this policy, and confidentiality is adhered to at all times. If you require further information please contact the Head of Communications.

telephone: 01642 624512 or www.dataprotection.gov.uk