



Keeping Backyard Poultry



Live poultry, such as chickens, ducks, geese, and turkeys, often carry harmful germs called *Salmonella*. After you touch a bird, or anything in the area where they live and roam, wash your hands so you don't get sick!

An increasing number of people around the country are choosing to keep live poultry, such as chickens or ducks, as part of a greener, healthier lifestyle. While you enjoy the benefits of backyard chickens and other poultry, it is important to consider the risk of illness, especially for children, which can result from handling live poultry or anything in the area where they live and roam.

Gastrointestinal (Enteric) Diseases from Animals

Check out CDC's [Gastrointestinal \(Enteric\) Diseases from Animals](http://www.cdc.gov/zoonotic) website, your one-stop-shop for information

about zoonotic outbreaks, prevention messages, and helpful resources.

What is the risk of getting *Salmonella* from live poultry?

It's common for chickens, ducks, and other poultry to carry *Salmonella*. *Salmonella* is a type of germ that naturally lives in the intestines of poultry and many other animals. Even organically fed poultry can have *Salmonella*. While it usually doesn't make the birds sick, *Salmonella* can cause serious illness when it is passed to people.

Check out the questions and answers below for more information on *Salmonella* infection and how to prevent getting germs from live poultry. You may also get more information by talking to your health care provider or your animal's veterinarian.

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

Live poultry may have *Salmonella* germs in their droppings and on their bodies (feathers, feet, and beaks) even when they appear healthy and clean. The germs can also get on cages, coops, feed and water dishes, hay, plants, and soil in the area where the birds live and roam. Additionally, the germs can be found on the hands, shoes, and clothing of those who handle the birds or work or play where they live and roam.

How do people get infected?



People become infected with *Salmonella* when they put their hands or other things that have been in contact with feces in or around their mouth. Young children are especially at risk for illness because their immune systems are still developing and because they are more likely than others to put their fingers or other items into their mouths. It is important to wash hands immediately after touching poultry or anything in the area where they live and roam, because the germs on your hands can easily spread to other people or things.

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

- DO



- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water right after touching live poultry or anything in the area where they live and roam. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.
 - Adults should supervise hand washing for young children.
 - Wash hands after removing soiled clothes and shoes.
 - If you collect eggs from the hens, thoroughly cook them, as *Salmonella* can pass from healthy looking hens into the interior of normal looking eggs.
 - Clean any equipment or materials associated with raising or caring for live poultry outside the house, such as cages or feed or water containers.
 - If you have free-roaming live poultry, assume where they live and roam is contaminated
- DON'T
 - Don't let children younger than 5 years of age, older adults, or people with weak immune systems handle or touch chicks, ducklings, or other live poultry.
 - Don't eat or drink in the area where the birds live or roam.
 - Don't let live poultry inside the house, in bathrooms, or especially in areas where food or drink is prepared, served, or stored, such as kitchens or outdoor patios.

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



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<http://www.cdc.gov/zoonotic/gi/salmonella>

Salmonella can make people sick with

- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Fever
- Abdominal cramps

Sometimes, people can become so sick from a *Salmonella* infection that they have to go to the hospital. Infants, elderly persons, and those with weakened immune systems are more likely than others to develop severe illness. When severe infection occurs, *Salmonella* may spread from the intestines to the bloodstream and then to other body sites and can cause death unless the person is treated promptly with antibiotics.

You can learn more about the signs, symptoms and treatment of *Salmonella* infection by visiting the [CDC's *Salmonella* website](http://www.cdc.gov/salmonella) (<http://www.cdc.gov/salmonella>). If you suspect you or your child has *Salmonella* infection, please contact your health care provider immediately.

Are there any policies about owning live poultry?

Rules and regulations vary by city, county, and state ordinances, so check with your local government to determine rules and regulations about owning live poultry.

More Information



- [Risk of Human *Salmonella* Infections from Live Baby Poultry](http://www.cdc.gov/features/SalmonellaBabyBirds/index.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/features/SalmonellaBabyBirds/index.html>)
- [Healthy Pets Healthy People](http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets) (<http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets>)
- [Poster: Live Baby Poultry and Preventing *Salmonella* Infections](http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/resources/posters.htm#poultry) (<http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/resources/posters.htm#poultry>)
 - **Spanish:** [Reduzca su riesgo de infección por *Salmonella* por el contacto con crías de aves de corrales](http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/resources/posters.htm#poultry) (<http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/resources/posters.htm#poultry>)
 - **French:** (<http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/resources/posters.htm#poultry>) [Lavez vos mains après avoir touché des canetons ou des poussins pour ne pas être malade!](http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/resources/posters.htm#poultry) (<http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/resources/posters.htm#poultry>)
- Podcasts
 - [CDC Kidtastics: Why Parents Should Think Twice Before Giving Baby Birds to Young Children for Easter \[PODCAST - 4:09 minutes\]](http://www2c.cdc.gov/podcasts/player.asp?f=11117) (<http://www2c.cdc.gov/podcasts/player.asp?f=11117>)
 - [CDC Kidtastics Podcast: Wash Your Hands \[PODCAST - 0:51 seconds\]](http://www2c.cdc.gov/podcasts/player.asp?f=789183) (<http://www2c.cdc.gov/podcasts/player.asp?f=789183>)
- [CDC Cup of Health: Cute But Risky](http://www2c.cdc.gov/podcasts/player.asp?f=8623376#transcript) (<http://www2c.cdc.gov/podcasts/player.asp?f=8623376#transcript>)
 - [CDC Radio: Hand Washing PSA \[PODCAST - 0:29 seconds\]](http://www2c.cdc.gov/podcasts/player.asp?f=234161) (<http://www2c.cdc.gov/podcasts/player.asp?f=234161>)
- [Digital Press Kit for Media: 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) (<http://www.cdc.gov/media/dpk/2013/dpk-live-poultry-salmonella.html>)
- CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)
 - [Notes from the Field: Multistate Outbreak of *Salmonella* Altona and Johannesburg Infections Linked to Chicks and Ducklings from a Mail-Order Hatchery — United States, February–October 2011](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6111a5.htm) (<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6111a5.htm>)
 - [Multistate Outbreaks of *Salmonella* Infections Associated with Live Poultry — United States, 2007](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5802a1.htm) (<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5802a1.htm>)
 - [Three Outbreaks of Salmonellosis Associated with Baby Poultry from Three Hatcheries — United States, 2006](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5612a1.htm?s_cid=mm5612a1_e) (http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5612a1.htm?s_cid=mm5612a1_e)
- [Compendium of Measures to Prevent Disease Associated with Animals in Public Settings, 2011](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/rr/rr6004.pdf) [PDF - 1.33MB] (<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/rr/rr6004.pdf>)

- [Appendix C: Hand-Washing Recommendations to Reduce Disease Transmission from Animals in Public Settings](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr6004a1.htm?s_cid=rr6004a1_w#AppC)
(http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr6004a1.htm?s_cid=rr6004a1_w#AppC)
- [United States Department of Agriculture's National Poultry Improvement Plan](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_dis_spec/poultry)
(http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_dis_spec/poultry) 
(<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>)
- [United States Department of Agriculture's Biosecurity for Birds](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/birdbiosecurity)
(http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/birdbiosecurity) 
(<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>)

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