

Safety Tips to Prevent *Salmonella* Infections during Easter



Eggs and chicks have become synonymous with Easter. In addition to symbolizing New Life and Resurrection, eggs and chicks are integrated into activities that bring joy and celebration to kids and adults. However, this comes with a potential hidden risk to health, namely the transmission of *Salmonella* bacteria, which cause serious infections in humans.

What is *Salmonella* and Salmonellosis?

- *Salmonella* is the name of bacteria that can cause illnesses in humans.
- *Salmonella* comprise more than 2,500 different serotypes (groups); however, only less than 100 serotypes are associated with most human infections.
- *Salmonella* can be transmitted to humans from different sources, including live poultry and contaminated food.
- Infections in people that are caused by *Salmonella* are referred to as salmonellosis.
- The most common symptoms include: diarrhea, vomiting, fever, nausea, headache and abdominal cramps which develop between 12 and 72 hours after infection and may last for 4 to 7 days.
- Individuals with salmonellosis usually recover without treatment. However, in some cases, salmonellosis can lead to hospitalization and untreated severe infections can result in death.
- Infants, the elderly, and people with weakened immunity are at a higher risk for developing severe infections. Children under the age of 5 are known to be among the most vulnerable to *Salmonella* infections.
- Salmonellosis can be treated by using prescription antibiotics.

Baby poultry and eggs as a source of *Salmonella* infections and transmission

- Even if the chicks look clean, they may have *Salmonella* in their droppings and on their bodies.
- The surface and inside of normal-looking eggs can also be contaminated with *Salmonella*.
- Chicks can spread *Salmonella* to their environment, including cages, soil, grass or any other item in contact with the chicks or in their vicinity.
- *Salmonella* is transmitted to humans when contaminated items (food, cloth) and hands are put in or around the mouth or via direct contact with the chicks like petting and kissing.

- *Salmonella* can be contracted via a variety of cross-contaminated foods such as eggs, meat, milk, fruits, and vegetables.

Recommendations to prevent *Salmonella* infections during Easter

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water after being in contact with eggs, chicks or their environment.
- Avoid cracked or dirty eggs.
- Do not consume raw or undercooked eggs.
- Do not use eggs that have been un-refrigerated from more than 2 hours.
- Clean the area and items that were used to house and maintain the chicks.
- Prevent vulnerable individuals (including infants) from coming in contact with chicks.
- Keep food and drink away from the area where the chicks are kept.
- Do not eat or drink while petting/ handling the chicks.
- Do not give chicks or contaminated eggs as gifts to vulnerable individuals (including children).

Always be cautious

If you suspect that you have contracted *Salmonella* or have been exhibiting symptoms of infection, please contact your doctor immediately for proper diagnosis and treatment.

Additional resources on *Salmonella* and associated infections

- <http://www.cdc.gov/features/salmonellaeggs/>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/salmonella/reportspubs/salmonella-atlas/serotyping-importance.html>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/salmonella/general/technical.html>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/SalmonellaBabyBirds/index.html>

Prepared by:

Issmat I. Kassem, MS, PhD, PCQI

Department of Nutrition and Food Sciences
Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences
American University of Beirut
P.O.Box 11-2036, Beirut, Lebanon