

What's your real salmonella risk?

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(HealthDay)—Every year, roughly 1 in 6 Americans gets sick from contaminated food. That includes more than 1.2 million illnesses due to the bacteria salmonella.

This nasty germ can cause a lot of unpleasant symptoms, including diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal cramps and fever, typically lasting for 4 to 7 days. And while [foodborne illnesses](#) in general have gone down in recent years, [salmonella infections](#) have increased, according to federal statistics.

Many cases are contracted from [food](#) eaten in restaurants, but salmonella can also be transmitted through common foods bought at stores and cooked at home. Infection is also more of a risk during warm weather when unrefrigerated foods at picnics and barbecues provide the ideal conditions for it.

Foods causing the most illnesses include eggs, sprouts and vine-stalk vegetables like tomatoes, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Next in line are beef, [unpasteurized milk](#) and juices, fish and poultry. You can also get salmonella from fruits like melons, nuts, cheese and even processed foods.

To protect yourself, always cook poultry, ground beef and eggs thoroughly. Avoid recipes that call for [raw eggs](#) that can be as varied as homemade mayonnaise, Caesar and other salad dressings, ice creams and cake frostings with an uncooked egg base. This applies whether the uncooked eggs are whole or only the yolks or the whites, the CDC says.

Take care to avoid cross-contamination. Keep uncooked meats separate from produce, cooked foods and ready-to-eat foods, and use a separate cutting board for trimming them. Wash your hands, all surfaces and utensils after contact with raw meat or poultry.

Also wash your hands after contact with pets—notably reptiles, turtles and birds—as well as after cleaning a litter box or picking up dog poop.

By following these guidelines, your chances of getting those unwanted salmonella symptoms should go way down.

More information: Learn more about sources of foodborne illnesses and their prevention at [FoodSafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov), from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

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