

# National warning on backyard chooks after salmonella outbreaks

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The Food Safety Information Council today issued a national warning to people with backyard chickens to always wash their hands after handling the chickens or their eggs following salmonellosis outbreaks in Victoria

and Queensland.

Council Chair, Cathy Moir, said that a recent salmonellosis outbreak in Queensland affected 17 people including 13 children under 11 years, five of whom were hospitalized. In Victoria there were nine cases of the rarer Salmonella Enteritidis, five of which were linked to newly purchased chicks.

"There have been [recent reports](#) of increased sales of backyard chickens and chicks during the COVID-19 lockdown. It's great to have fresh eggs and for your kids to learn about where their [food](#) comes from but backyard chooks and ducks can be a source of Salmonella infections which can cause serious illnesses and, in some people, can lead to chronic conditions such as Reiter's Syndrome or reactive arthritis. When purchasing pet chickens you should look for vaccinated birds from a reputable commercial source and keep them healthy with medications for parasites including roundworms and tapeworms. Also, if your chickens look unwell check with a vet."

Here are eight simple tips about how to avoid infections from your chickens and their eggs:

1. Keep the nesting materials and litter clean and dry and change it regularly.
2. Gather eggs from their nesting places daily to make sure they are fresh. Label them with the date and store in the fridge in a clean, covered container away from other ready to eat foods.
3. Carefully check eggs for any cracks, wipe off any visible dirt with a dry cloth or paper towel but don't wash the eggs in water—this can transfer the contamination into the egg contents.
4. Always remember to wash your hands with soap and water and dry thoroughly after handling your chickens and their eggs. If children and grandchildren have been helping, be sure they wash

their hands too. The bacteria can live inside poultry enclosures so wash hands even if you do not touch the birds.

5. Don't let children snuggle or kiss the birds, touch their mouth, or eat or drink around chickens and don't allow chickens inside the house.
6. Don't keep or store [chicken](#) food or storage containers in or near kitchens or other [food preparation](#) areas.
7. Don't wash the chickens' food and water bowls in sinks used for food preparation, washing [kitchen utensils](#) or for obtaining drinking water.
8. Don't use backyard eggs in egg dishes that will be served raw or only minimally cooked, as the shells are more likely to be contaminated with Salmonella than commercially washed [eggs](#), which are washed under carefully controlled conditions.

**More information:** Find out more about egg safety at [foodsafety.asn.au/eggs/](https://foodsafety.asn.au/eggs/)

Provided by Food Safety Information Council

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