



# How to Reduce Salmonella Risk when Raising Backyard Chickens

Three Methods: [Interacting with Chickens Safely](#) [Keeping Your Coop Clean](#) [Treating an Infection](#)

When raising chickens, salmonella is always a risk. To reduce your risk, stay safe when interacting with your chickens. Strive to minimize touch and always wash your hands after handling your chickens and their supplies. Clean your coop regularly to minimize the build up of dangerous bacteria. If you do end up with a salmonella infection, treat it promptly to avoid complications.

Method  
1

## Interacting with Chickens Safely

**1 Wash your hands after handling chickens and supplies.** This can help you get rid of any bacteria that may cause salmonella. It is vital that you wash your hands each and every time you come into physical contact with chickens or their supplies.<sup>[1]</sup>

- To wash your hands properly, wet them in running water and then lather them with soap. Make sure you target your whole hands, including between your fingers, under your fingernails, and the backs of your hands.<sup>[2]</sup>
- Make sure to scrub your hands for 20 seconds. To help keep track of time, hum or sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice.
- Rinse your hands when you're done and make sure to clean them using a clean towel.

**2 Minimize touching your chickens.** In general, the less you handle your chickens the less likely you'll be to contact salmonella. Only handle your chickens when necessary, such as examining them when they're wounded.<sup>[3]</sup>

- You should avoid things like cuddling or kissing your birds.
- If you do touch your chicken for whatever reason, do not touch your mouth afterwards until you've washed your hands.

**3 Do not eat or drink near your birds.** Your eating area and chicken coop should be strictly separate places. Eat indoors, away from your chickens, and do not bring beverages to drink near the chicken coop. If you do eat outside, do so far away from the chicken coop.<sup>[4]</sup>

**4 Keep your chickens outside.** If chickens are indoors, they can contaminate your home with bacteria that could cause salmonella. This is especially true if your chickens are anywhere near the kitchen. Do not allow chickens to come inside. Always raise chickens as strictly outdoor animals.<sup>[5]</sup>

**5 Do not let young children handle chickens.** Young children are more vulnerable to contracting salmonella. Children under the age of five should not have any contact with the chickens. Make sure to monitor young children at all times to keep them away from the chickens and the coop.<sup>[6]</sup>

- Adults with weakened immune systems are as vulnerable to disease as young children, so anyone with a weak immune system should also stay away from the chickens.

Method  
2

## Keeping Your Coop Clean

**1 Shovel out the coop.** Cleaning your chicken coop regularly can prevent the build up of bacteria, lessening the likelihood of diseases like salmonella. This is why it's important to clean your chicken coop regularly. The first step

to cleaning a chicken coop is shoveling the coop.<sup>[7]</sup>

- Wearing gloves, use a shovel to remove dirt, cobwebs, shavings, feathers, and droppings from the inside of the coop.
- For best results, use a square shovel.

**2 Hose down the coop.** Once you've shoveled out the coop, take a hose. Spray down the inside of the coop to remove dust and stuck on dirt and debris. Spray down the floors, walls, nesting boxes, and roosts.<sup>[8]</sup>

**3 Shovel again.** Oftentimes, the hose will dislodge stuck on dirt and debris from the chicken coop. If you notice any new materials in the coop, take your shovel and once again scoop out the coop. You do not want anything like old feathers, droppings, or cobwebs to remain in the coop after cleaning.<sup>[9]</sup>

**4 Scrub down the coop.** In a bucket, mix equal parts white vinegar and water. Use a broom or brush to scrub down the whole coop. Make sure to get all areas of the coop, including nesting boxes, beds, lofts, and so on. Remove any dirt or grime while you scrub.<sup>[10]</sup>

- Make sure you wear gloves during this process.

**5 Rinse and dry the coop.** Once you've scrubbed down the coop, use the hose again. Spray down the coop until you remove all vinegar residue. Allow the coop to air dry. Keep the doors and windows open to encourage sunlight to dry out the coop.<sup>[11]</sup>

Method  
3

### Treating an Infection

**1 See a doctor under certain circumstances.** For the most part, medical treatment is not necessary for a salmonella infection as it should clear up on its own. However, in some circumstances medical intervention may be necessary.<sup>[12]</sup>

- If your illness lasts longer than a few days, see a doctor. You should also see a doctor if you have a high fever or bloody stools.
- Infants or young children that have been infected should see a doctor.

**2 Take the proper medications.** Certain medications can help with the symptoms of a salmonella infection. If you have a severe diarrhea, take over-the-counter anti-diarrheal medications. Make sure you check to see if any medications you're taking interact with over-the-counter medications.<sup>[13]</sup>

- If you're sick enough to need medical help, your doctor may prescribe antibiotics to treat the infection. However, do not take antibiotics unless instructed to do so by your doctor. Antibiotics can actually be harmful for a mild case of salmonella.

**3 Stay hydrated.** As diarrhea and vomiting are symptoms of salmonella, staying hydrated is important. Have water on hand for the duration of the infection. Sip your water on occasion to stay hydrated.<sup>[14]</sup>

- If drinking water makes you feel sick, you can also suck on ice cubes.

**4 Help infected children stay hydrated.** If your child has a salmonella infection, make sure they stay hydrated. Young children will benefit from oral rehydration solutions sold at drug stores and supermarkets.<sup>[15]</sup>

- However, check with your doctor first. In some cases, your doctor may advise against such methods.

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2. <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>
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