

Salmonellosis

Why is salmonellosis important?

Salmonellosis infection is the most commonly reported foodborne illness in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). It is a common bacterial infection caused by any of more than 2,000 different strains of *salmonella*. These bacteria infect the intestinal tract and occasionally the blood. Annually, there are 650 to 800 cases reported in Washington State. State sources of the bacteria include poultry products, pets (reptiles, exotic animals), cattle, raw milk and milk products, fruits and vegetables.

Salmonellosis symptoms include severe diarrhea, bloody diarrhea, fever, chills, abdominal discomfort, and occasionally vomiting. Symptoms appear one to three days after exposure. Serious bloodstream infections can occur, particularly in the very young or elderly. Most people recover on their own without medication. Some people require intravenous fluids to prevent dehydration.

How are we doing?

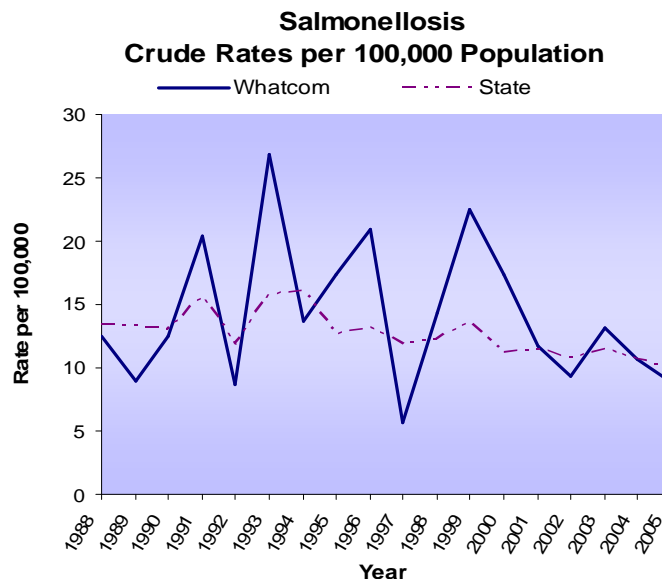
The following chart provides crude incidence rates per 100,000 population for Whatcom County and Washington State from 1988 through 2005. The table, on the next page, also provides these rates and number of cases through 2005.

Because there are relatively few cases of salmonellosis in Whatcom County, there is a great deal of variance in annual incidence rates. Even though rates go up and down, the chart shows that Whatcom County fluctuations follow the state trend line.

Note:

These comparisons are influenced by variations in diagnosis and reporting by health care providers. Thus, if reporting in Whatcom County is more frequent than in other local health jurisdictions, reported rates will be higher.

Also, the extreme variations in Whatcom rates result from very small case numbers (see table for detail).



What remains to be done?

Whatcom County Public Health provides food service inspections and public education on proper food preparation and cooking, as well as appropriate hand-washing techniques. Public Health also investigates each reported case to determine possible origin and to prevent further spread of the disease. Statistical analysis of the potential risk factors identified during the investigation of each case is done. Risk factors are then ranked in order of frequency to determine the cause of the infection. Public Health will continue to educate the public on risks and prevention activities. We will continue our work with other local and State agencies to reduce the occurrence of the disease or associated complications.

Salmonellosis Crude Rates & Cases per 100,000 Population

Year	Whatcom County		Washington State	
	Rates per 100,000 Population	# of Cases	Rates per 100,000 Population	# of Cases
1988	12.5	15	13.4	617
1989	8.9	11	13.3	629
1990	12.5	16	13.0	634
1991	20.4	27	15.7	789
1992	8.7	12	11.9	609
1993	26.9	38	15.8	830
1994	13.7	20	16.1	863
1995	17.4	26	12.6	691
1996	20.9	32	13.1	730
1997	5.7	9	11.9	673
1998	14.4	23	12.2	702
1999	22.5	37	13.6	791
2000	17.4	29	11.2	660
2001	11.7	20	11.4	681
2002	9.3	16	10.8	655
2003	13.2	23	11.5	699
2004	10.7	19	10.7	660
2005	8.8	16	10.0	626

SALMONELLOSIS PREVENTION GUIDELINES:

- ❖ *Wash your hands with soap and warm water before preparing or eating foods, and after handling raw poultry, eggs, meat or fish.*
- ❖ *Wash hands, after using the bathroom or changing a baby's diaper, and after contact with animals.*
- ❖ *Make sure children, particularly those who handle pets, wash their hands properly.*
- ❖ *Do not allow reptiles in areas where you feed or bathe small children..*
- ❖ *Wrap fresh meat and poultry in plastic bags at the market to prevent fluids from dripping on other foods.*
- ❖ *Refrigerate foods properly.*
- ❖ *Defrost meat and poultry in the refrigerator; minimize holding at room temperature.*
- ❖ *Wash and sanitize cutting boards and counters used for meat or poultry preparation immediately after use to avoid cross contaminating other foods.*
- ❖ *Avoid eating raw or undercooked eggs, poultry, and meats.*
- ❖ *Never prepare food for other people if you have diarrhea.*
- ❖ *Do not swim in pools or lakes if you have diarrhea.*

