



Department of Health  
Agency of Human Services



## Vermont Salmonella Case Linked to Baby Chicks

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BURLINGTON – Baby chick season is in full swing, and so is the season when public health officials see a rise in the number of *Salmonella* infections tied to these young birds.

So far this season, the Vermont Department of Health has investigated one case of salmonellosis in an infant who had contact with baby poultry. The child's illness was caused by the same strain of *Salmonella* discovered in the chicks that were recently purchased from a local feed store.

Dozens of people in several states have also been infected with the same strain of *Salmonella*. The Health Department is collaborating with other state health departments, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the United States Department of Agriculture on an investigation to find the source of the baby poultry and stop the outbreak.

More information about the investigation can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/Salmonella/live-poultry-04-13/index.html>.

When baby poultry carry *Salmonella* they may not appear to be sick, but they can still spread the germs to people. Live poultry may have *Salmonella* bacteria in their droppings and on their bodies (feathers, feet, and beaks) even when they appear healthy and clean. The germs can also get on cages, coops, and other objects in the area where birds live and roam. People can be exposed to *Salmonella* by holding, cuddling, or kissing the birds and by touching objects where the birds live, such as cages or feed and water bowls. People become infected with *Salmonella* when they touch something that is contaminated with *Salmonella* bacteria and then touch their mouth or eat with their hands.

Infection with *Salmonella* typically causes diarrhea, vomiting, fever, and abdominal cramps. Illness can be severe and require hospitalization. Young children, the elderly, and those with weakened immune systems are more likely than others to develop severe illness. When this occurs, *Salmonella* may spread from the intestines to the bloodstream and then to other parts of the body. Infection can be fatal without prompt treatment.

Young children are especially at risk for illness because their immune systems are still developing and they are more likely to put their fingers or other items into their mouth. Wash your hands immediately after touching poultry or anything in the area where they live and roam, because the germs on your hands can easily spread to other people or objects.

Reduce the risk of *Salmonella* infection from live poultry by taking the following common sense actions:

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water right after touching live baby poultry or anything in the area where they live and roam. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available. Supervise hand washing for young children.
- Don't let younger children, especially those younger than 5 years, handle or touch chicks, ducklings, or other live poultry.
- Don't snuggle or kiss the birds, touch your mouth, or eat or drink around live baby poultry.
- Don't let live baby poultry inside the house, in bathrooms, or especially in areas such as kitchens or outdoor patios where food or drink is prepared, served, or stored. Keep live poultry outside.
- Don't eat or drink in the area where the birds live or roam.
- Don't clean any equipment or materials associated with raising or caring for live poultry, such as cages or feed or water containers, inside the house.
- Don't give live baby poultry as gifts to young children.

For more information about Salmonella, visit [healthvermont.gov](http://healthvermont.gov). For more information on poultry management, contact the Animal Health Office at the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (802) 828-2421.

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