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Watch out for *Salmonella* poisoning as temperatures rise

NSW Health is warning people to be wary of *Salmonella* poisoning as summer temperatures rise, with 201 cases already reported across the state last month.

Dr Vicky Sheppeard, Director Communicable Diseases NSW Health, said careful preparation and storage of food is the best defence against salmonellosis – a type of gastroenteritis caused by *Salmonella* bacteria found in animals.

“Products containing undercooked eggs, and the spread of germs in the kitchen, are the most common source of salmonellosis outbreaks in NSW,” Dr Sheppeard said.

“Salmonellosis can be quite severe and people sometimes have to be hospitalised to manage dehydration, particularly in young babies, elderly people and those with weakened immune systems.”

Salmonellosis symptoms include fever, headache, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting. Symptoms usually start around six to 72 hours after the contaminated food is eaten and usually last for four to seven days, but can continue for much longer.

Altogether 1391 salmonellosis cases were reported in NSW last summer.

“It is important that people do not prepare food for others while they are unwell with salmonellosis and, as a precaution, for 48 hours after symptoms have passed.”

NSW Food Authority CEO Dr Lisa Szabo said to reduce the risk of *Salmonella* poisoning, consumers and food retailers can use commercially produced products instead of handmade mayonnaise and sauces when preparing food.

“It is also much safer to use commercially pasteurised eggs rather than raw eggs in ready-to-eat products such as desserts and dressings,” Dr Szabo said.

“Businesses in NSW must comply with strict requirements around the use of raw eggs in foods. Retailers should remember that food laws in NSW prohibit the sale of eggs with dirty or cracked shells, which increase the risk of contamination, and should reject any eggs that are not intact.

“While preparing and handling food, keep benches and utensils clean and dry and do not allow cross contamination of raw and cooked products.”

Dr Sheppeard said food must be cooked thoroughly to kill *Salmonella* and food should not be left out in the heat. The longer food is left at room temperature the more the *Salmonella* bacteria will multiply. Refrigerated food should be kept at less than five degrees Celsius and hot foods should be kept above 60 degrees Celsius.

“Most people recover from salmonellosis by resting and drinking fluids but antibiotics are required in complicated cases,” Dr Sheppeard said.

“Salmonellosis can take the joy out of the festive season but just a few simple precautions with the preparation and storage of food can make all the difference.”

For further information, see the Salmonellosis fact sheet on the NSW Health [website](#).

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