



News Release

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Contact: [Kate Lynch](#), Communications Office

360-236-4072

Chicks and ducklings can carry *Salmonella*, putting kids at risk

Stuffed animals are safer Easter gifts than live birds

OLYMPIA — A springtime tradition of giving children fuzzy chicks or ducklings can put kids at risk for serious illness. Each year, people get infected with *Salmonella* after handling chicks or ducklings.

“Baby birds are so soft and cute that people might not realize they may carry harmful bacteria called *Salmonella*,” said State Health Officer Dr. Maxine Hayes. “While it’s fun for children to get a baby bird, even healthy birds can carry bacteria that can make people sick.”

Last year 10 people in Washington got sick with *Salmonella* illness after handling chicks, ducklings, and other poultry from a hatchery linked to an 11-state outbreak. Half of the cases in our state were children under 13 years old. Nationally, more than 450 illnesses were linked to *Salmonella* outbreaks related to live poultry.

Spring is the season when many people who keep chickens or ducks in backyard flocks order baby birds. Whether chicks are bought as Easter gifts or to raise for egg production, children should be supervised carefully when they’re touching these animals or their environments, to make sure they wash their hands right away. Another prevention step is to make sure children don’t nuzzle or kiss animals.

Kids under five, elderly adults, and people with weakened immune systems are most likely to get very sick from *Salmonella*. People in these groups should avoid handling live poultry.

Salmonella infection can cause diarrhea, fever, stomach pain, nausea, and vomiting. Symptoms usually last several days. Severe cases may require hospitalization, and occasionally result in death.

Salmonella in baby birds

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Raising chickens or other poultry for their eggs is becoming more popular. By following the recommendations of the [Washington State Department of Agriculture](#) people can keep their families, and their birds, healthy.

More tips for [avoiding *Salmonella* infection from chicks and ducklings](#) are on our webpage.

The [Department of Health website](#) (doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*.

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