Salmonella Basics
More than two thousand different types of salmonella bacteria exist. In the United States, the most common varieties are Salmonella enteritidis and typhimurium. Both of these varieties cause an illness called salmonellosis, which is an intestinal disorder. The disorder is also called salmonella gastroenteritis. About forty thousand cases of this illness are reported each year in the United States. However, most people who get salmonellosis do not go to a doctor. So the actual number of cases is probably much higher—perhaps as high as 2 million per year.

In other parts of the world, Salmonella typhi is common. This strain of salmonella causes a serious disease called typhoid fever. Typhoid fever spreads easily in unsanitary conditions, and it kills up to 20 percent of its victims.

Getting Around
Most salmonella infections begin when a person eats contaminated food. Eggs and raw meats are the