
Typhoid Fever

What is typhoid fever?

- An infection caused by the bacteria *Salmonella Typhi*. It is a different bacteria than the *Salmonella* that causes a gastrointestinal illness.
- The bacteria are found in the blood early in the disease, and in bowel movements and urine after the first week.

How does a person get typhoid fever?

- A person can become infected by:
 - eating food or drinking water that has been contaminated by an infected person,
 - eating shellfish, particularly oysters, from sewage-contaminated ocean water,
 - eating raw fruits, vegetables fertilized with waste,
 - consuming milk and milk products contaminated by hands of infected people.
- Flies may infect foods, in which the bacteria then multiply to numbers large enough to cause illness.
- Sexual transmission from an infected person, with or without symptoms, has been documented.
- Usually acquired through international travel.
- A person is infectious as long as the bacteria are in the bowel movements or urine. A few people will become permanent carriers. A carrier is a person who continues to have the bacteria in bowel movements or urine for more than one year.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Symptoms develop 3 days to over 60 days (usually 8 to 14 days) after a person has become infected.
- Common symptoms include:
 - ongoing fever
 - severe headache
 - fatigue
 - loss of appetite
 - slow heart rate
 - enlarged spleen
 - non-productive cough in the early stage of the illness
 - rose spots on the upper body of 25% of Caucasian persons, and
 - constipation more often than diarrhea in adults.
- Ulcers in the bowel, that can cause bleeding or perforation, can occur in persons who go untreated for a long period of time.
- Severity of illness depends on factors such as the number of bacteria ingested, duration of illness before adequate treatment, and age.
- Those most at risk are persons with low levels of stomach acid or who are HIV positive.

How is typhoid fever treated?

- See your doctor immediately for antibiotic treatment.

How is typhoid fever prevented?

- Always wash hands thoroughly:
 - after using the toilet
 - after sexual contact
 - after changing a diaper
 - before preparing, serving or eating food.
- Avoid unpasteurized milk or milk products.
- Eat only well-cooked shellfish (boil or steam for at least 10 minutes before serving).
- Keep salads and cold foods refrigerated after preparation.
- People travelling to countries with poor sanitation should receive typhoid vaccine prior to departure.

All travellers should seek out information regarding water, sanitation, and food preparation while travelling as well as proper hand washing and/or use of hand sanitizers.

- Typhoid carriers should be excluded from handling food and from providing patient care.

Quick facts

- Typhoid fever is:
 - an infection of the blood.
 - transmitted by contaminated food and water.
- Hand washing is very important.
- Travellers to countries with poor sanitation should receive typhoid vaccine.

For more information, contact your doctor
or Population and Public Health at **306-655-4612**
