

Typhoid Fever

What is typhoid fever?

Typhoid fever is a life-threatening illness caused by the bacterium *Salmonella Typhi*. The majority of infections are acquired while traveling internationally; typhoid fever is still common in the developing world.

How do I get typhoid fever?

Persons with typhoid fever carry the bacteria in their bloodstream and intestinal tract. In addition, a small number of persons, called carriers, recover from typhoid fever but continue to carry the bacteria. Both ill persons and carriers shed the bacteria in their feces (stool).

You can get typhoid fever if you eat food or drink beverages that have been handled by a person who is shedding the bacteria or if sewage contaminated with the bacteria gets into the water you use for drinking or washing food. Therefore, typhoid fever is more common in areas of the world where hand washing is less frequent and water is likely to be contaminated with sewage. Once the bacteria are ingested, they multiply and spread into the bloodstream. The body reacts with fever and other signs and symptoms.

Symptoms

In the early stage of typhoid fever, infected individuals usually have a sustained fever as high as 103° to 104° F (39° to 40° C), headache, weakness, stomach pains and/or loss of appetite. In some cases, patients have a rash of flat, rose-colored spots. The only way to know for sure if an illness is typhoid fever is to have samples of stool or blood tested for the presence of the bacteria. Even if an individual's symptoms go away, they may still be carrying the bacteria and could pass the disease to other people.

Prevention

- Wash your hands carefully with soap and water after using the bathroom and before food preparation and eating.
- Avoid consuming risky foods and drinks.
- Get vaccinated against typhoid fever if you are traveling to a country where typhoid is common. Visit a doctor or travel clinic to discuss your vaccination options. You will need to complete your vaccination at least one week before you travel so that the vaccine has time to take effect.
- Taking antibiotics will not prevent typhoid fever; they only help treat it.
- If you work at a job where you handle food, provide healthcare for others or care for small children, do not return to work until a doctor has determined that you no longer carry any typhoid bacteria. This will lower the chance that you will pass the infection on to someone else.
- If you suspect you have typhoid fever, see a healthcare provider immediately.

Treatment for typhoid fever

Typhoid fever can be prevented and can usually be treated with antibiotics. Persons given antibiotics usually feel better within 2 to 3 days, and deaths rarely occur. Persons who do not get treatment may continue to have fever for weeks or months and 20% may die from complications of the infection.



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