

What is Typhoid Fever?

Typhoid Fever is a contagious illness caused by a bacteria called *Salmonella typhi*.

What are symptoms of typhoid?

The initial symptoms include a sustained fever as high as 103° to 104°, headache, malaise, lack of appetite, constipation, sore throat, and a non productive cough. Diarrhea and vomiting may occur later but are less likely than with other types of *Salmonella*. Typhoid illness may also cause spleen enlargement and macular papular rash, or rose spots on the trunk in 30% of cases. These symptoms may last two weeks or longer.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms can appear between 3-60 days after exposure, with the average time of 8-14 days from exposure to onset of symptoms.

How is typhoid spread?

Humans are the only reservoir for Typhoid. Typhoid fever is spread by consuming food or water which has been contaminated by someone who has typhoid fever and is shedding the bacteria in their stool or urine. In countries where typhoid is common (endemic) important risk factors for exposure to the bacteria are: consuming shellfish from sewage contaminated beds, consuming vegetables fertilized by night soil and consuming unpasteurized contaminated milk or milk products (contaminated by hands of carriers). In areas where typhoid is common, food may be contaminated by flies carrying the bacteria from food to food.

How long is a person infectious (contagious)?

A person is infectious for as long as the typhoid bacteria is excreted in their stool. About 10% of untreated patients excrete the bacteria for 3 months after onset of symptoms and approximately 2%-5% become permanent carriers.

How is typhoid diagnosed and treated?

The bacteria can be identified from the stool, blood or urine. A person with suspected typhoid fever should seek medical attention for necessary testing and antibiotic treatment.

How can typhoid be prevented?

1. Get vaccinated against typhoid fever when traveling to a country known to have typhoid fever.
2. Before traveling to a foreign country check the safety of the drinking water.
3. If you drink water, buy it bottled or bring it to a rolling boil for 1 minute before you drink it. Bottled carbonated water is safer than uncarbonated water.
4. Ask for drinks without ice unless the ice is made from bottled or boiled water. Avoid popsicles and flavored ices that may have been made with contaminated water.
5. Eat foods that have been thoroughly cooked and that are still hot and steaming.
6. Avoid raw vegetables and fruits that cannot be peeled. Vegetables like lettuce are easily contaminated and are very hard to wash well.

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7. When eating raw fruit or vegetables that can be peeled, peel them yourself. (Wash your hands with soap first.) Do not eat the peelings.
8. Avoid foods and beverages from street vendors. It is difficult for food to be kept clean on the street, and many travelers get sick from food bought from street vendors.

Typhoid is a Washington State reportable disease and must be reported to your local health department. In Snohomish County, contact Communicable Disease Surveillance and Response at 425.339.5278, Monday through Friday, 8AM - 5 PM.

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