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Disease Spotlight: TYPHOID FEVER



What is typhoid fever?

Typhoid fever is a **life-threatening** illness caused by infection by the **bacterium *Salmonella typhi***.

What are the symptoms of typhoid fever?

Typhoid fever is recognized by the sudden onset of **sustained fevers** as high as 104°F, severe **headache, nausea and loss of appetite**. It may also be accompanied by a rash of flat, rose-colored spots, stomach pains, or a hoarse cough.

Where in the world does typhoid fever occur?

Typhoid fever is common in most parts of the world, except in industrialized regions such as the United States, Europe, Canada, Japan, and Australia. In the **US, approximately 400 cases** occur each year, most in people who have **traveled internationally**. Typhoid fever is still **very common in the developing world**, with about 21.5 million people affected each year.

How is typhoid fever spread?

Typhoid fever is transmitted by food and water contaminated by the **feces and urine** of patients and carriers. It occurs only in humans. You can get typhoid fever if you **eat food or drink beverages** that have been handled by a person who is shedding *S. Typhi* or if **sewage** contaminated with *S. Typhi* bacteria gets into the water you use for drinking, bathing, or washing food.

How is typhoid fever treated?

Typhoid fever can be treated fairly easily with **antibiotics**. Three antibiotics commonly prescribed to combat typhoid fever are **ampicillin, trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole, and ciprofloxacin**. Persons given antibiotics usually begin to feel better within 2 to 3 days, and deaths rarely occur. However, persons who do not get treatment may continue to have fever for weeks or months, and as many as 20% may die from complications of the infection.

The disease can also be prevented by **vaccine**, given either as an injection or orally.

What can be done to reduce the risk of typhoid fever when traveling internationally?

- **Boil water** before drinking it, or drink only bottled water.
- Ask for **drinks without ice**, and avoid popsicles and flavored ices that may have been made from contaminated water.
- Avoid **raw shellfish** and **raw fruits and vegetables** unless you have peeled them yourself.
- Only eat foods that have been **thoroughly cooked** and are still hot.

Source:

For more information on typhoid fever, visit
http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/typhoid_fever or
<http://www.who.int/inf-fs/en/fact149.html>