

# Typhoid Fever

## What is Typhoid Fever?

Typhoid fever is a bacterial infection of the intestinal tract and occasionally the bloodstream. Most of the cases are acquired during foreign travel to underdeveloped countries. The germ that causes typhoid is a unique human strain of salmonella called *Salmonella typhi*. Outbreaks are rare.

## Who gets Typhoid Fever?

Anyone can get typhoid fever but the greatest risk exists to travellers visiting countries where the disease is common. Occasionally, local cases can be traced to exposure to a person who is a chronic carrier.

Typhoid germs are passed in the feces and, to some extent, the urine of infected people. The germs are spread by eating or drinking water for foods contaminated by feces from the infected individual.

## What are the symptoms of Typhoid Fever?

Symptoms may be mild or severe and may include fever, headache, malaise, anorexia, non-reproductive cough, constipation or diarrhea (constipation occurs more often in adults), rose-colored spots on the trunk and an enlarged spleen and liver. Relapses are common. Fatalities are less than 1 percent with antibiotic treatment. Symptoms generally appear one to three weeks after exposure. Symptoms can appear in as little as 3 days to over 60 days, the average range is 8 - 14 days.

## For how long can an infected person carry the Typhoid germ?

The carrier stage varies from a number of days to years. Only about 2 - 5 % of cases go on to become lifelong carriers of the germ and this tends to occur more often in adults than in children.

## Should infected people be isolated?

Because the germ is passed in the feces of infected people, only people with active diarrhea who are unable to control their bowel habits (infants, certain handicapped individuals) should be isolated. Most infected people may return to work or school when they have recovered, provided that they carefully wash hands after toilet visits (e.g. using soap and water for at least 15 seconds). Food handlers, health care workers and children in day care must obtain the approval of the local health unit before returning to their routine activities. Individuals may not return to work until three consecutive negative stool cultures are confirmed.

## Is there a vaccine for Typhoid Fever?

A vaccine is available but is generally reserved for people travelling to underdeveloped countries where significant exposure may occur. Strict attention to food and water precautions while travelling to such countries is the most effective preventative method.

*This fact sheet provides basic information only. It must not take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always talk to a health care professional about any health concerns.*

**For further information contact the Infectious Disease Program at 625-8318  
or toll free 1-888-294-6630, ext. 8318.**

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