

Typhoid Fever

What is typhoid fever?

Typhoid fever and Paratyphoid fever is an infectious disease caused by the bacterium *Salmonella Typhi* and *Salmonella* serotype *Paratyphi*. In the United States, about 400 cases occur each year with approximately 75% of these cases acquired during travel to underdeveloped countries, including Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Typhoid fever is uncommon in Oklahoma. Since 1990, 0 to 3 cases have been reported each year.

What are the symptoms of typhoid fever?

People with this disease may experience mild or severe symptoms. Persons with typhoid fever usually have a sustained fever as high as 103° to 104°F (39° to 40°C). The symptoms of typhoid fever may also include weakness, headache, stomach pains, or loss of appetite. Constipation or diarrhea may also occur. In some cases, persons may develop a rash of flat, rose-colored spots on the trunk of the body.

How is typhoid fever spread?

Salmonella Typhi lives only in humans; there are no animals that carry it. Persons with typhoid fever carry the bacteria in their blood and intestines while experiencing symptoms. In addition, some people recover from typhoid fever but continue to carry the bacteria; these people are called carriers. Both ill persons and carriers can shed *Salmonella Typhi* in their feces and sometimes urine. A person can get typhoid fever if they eat or drink beverages that have been contaminated by feces from a person who is shedding *Salmonella Typhi*, or if the bacterium gets into the water used for drinking or washing uncooked foods like fruits and vegetables.

How soon after infection do symptoms occur?

Symptoms may appear from 3 days to 60 days after exposure, but usually within 8 to 14 days. The incubation period for paratyphoid fever is 1 to 10 days.

How long can an infected person spread the bacteria?

The disease can be spread to others if the bacteria remain in the stool and urine, which may vary from days to years. About 10% of untreated typhoid fever cases will continue to shed the bacteria in their feces for 3 months after experiencing symptoms; 5% become permanent carriers. About 10% of people relapse 1-3 weeks after recovery.

Should people sick with typhoid fever stay home from work, school, or day care?

If a person is employed as a food handler, works in a day care center, or has direct patient care duties, they should not work while they have diarrhea. Children with diarrhea should not attend a day care center or a school setting. People who are sick with typhoid fever will be given specific instructions by a public health nurse or epidemiologist about working with food, providing direct patient care, and working in/attending a day care center or school setting.

What is the treatment for typhoid fever?

Specific antibiotics may be prescribed by a doctor to treat typhoid fever. Persons given antibiotics usually begin to feel better within 2 to 3 days. However, persons who do not get treatment may continue to have symptoms of illness for weeks or months. Before antibiotics were available, the fatality rate from typhoid fever was as high as 20%. The fatality rate is less than 1% among those given timely treatment.

Is there a vaccine against typhoid fever?

Yes. Two vaccines are currently available, an oral (6 years and older) and an injectable vaccine (2 years and older). Travelers to countries where typhoid fever occurs should plan with a travel clinic or their healthcare provider in order to receive their vaccinations in time to be fully protected before arrival.

How can food handlers prevent the spread of typhoid fever?

There are three important ways a food handler can prevent the spread of typhoid fever.

1. Food handlers should never work while ill with fever, nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, or diarrhea. If a food handler has any of these symptoms, they should immediately stop handling food and report the symptoms to the restaurant management.
2. Food handlers should always use good hand washing techniques—especially after each use of the restroom.
3. Wear gloves when handling or preparing ready-to-eat foods. A fresh pair of gloves must be put on after each time a food handler uses the rest room, whenever gloves have been used to touch items other than food, after touching raw uncooked foods, or clean utensils used to directly prepare food. A new pair of gloves should always be put on if a tear is noticed. It is important to know that gloves are not a substitute for good hand washing. Hands must always be washing prior to using gloves.

When you travel to areas of risk, remember to “Boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it.”

1. Buy bottled water or bring local water to a rolling boil for 1 minute before you drink it. Bottled carbonated water is safer than uncarbonated water.
2. 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.
3. Eat foods that have been thoroughly cooked and are still hot and steaming.
4. Avoid raw vegetables and fruits that cannot be peeled. Lettuce can remain contaminated even after it is washed.
5. Wash your hands with soap and water before eating.
6. Avoid foods and beverages from street vendors unless steaming hot.
7. Travelers can also receive information on typhoid fever and other diseases by visiting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention travelers’ health website