

Frequently Asked Questions

Typhoid Fever



What is typhoid fever?

Typhoid fever is a life-threatening illness caused by the virulent bacteria *Salmonella Typhi*.

How is typhoid fever spread?

Typhoid fever spreads through contaminated food and water or through close contact with someone who's infected.

What are the symptoms?

Signs and symptoms are likely to develop gradually, often appearing 1-3 weeks after exposure to the disease.

Early illness - Once signs and symptoms do appear, you're likely to experience:

- Low-grade fever that increases daily
- Headache
- Weakness and fatigue
- Muscle aches
- Sweating
- Dry cough
- Loss of appetite and weight loss
- Abdominal pain
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Rash
- Extremely swollen abdomen

Later illness - If you don't receive treatment, you may:

- Become delirious
- Lie motionless and exhausted with your eyes half-closed in what's known as the typhoid state
- Life-threatening complications often develop at this time which include:
 - Intestinal bleeding or holes that may develop in the 3rd week of illness. Triggering signs and symptoms include severe abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, and bloodstream infections (sepsis). This life-threatening complication requires immediate medical care.
 - Inflammation of the heart muscle or the lining of the heart and valves
 - Pneumonia
 - Inflammation of the pancreas
 - Kidney or bladder infections
 - Meningitis
 - Psychiatric problems such as delirium, hallucinations and paranoid psychosis

Diagnosis

Diagnosis can usually be confirmed by identifying *S. typhi* in a culture of blood or other body fluid or tissue.

Treatment

Antibiotic therapy is the only effective treatment for typhoid fever. Commonly prescribed antibiotics are:

- Ciprofloxacin (Cipro); a pill, often prescribed for non-pregnant adults
- Ceftriaxone (Rocephin); injectable antibiotic as an alternative for people who may not be candidates for Cipro, such as children.

Other treatments:

- Drinking fluids; this helps prevent the dehydration that results from a prolonged fever and diarrhea.
- Surgery; if the intestines become perforated, surgery is needed to repair the hole

Prevention

- Vaccines; injection or pill
- Wash your hands in hot, soapy water; Wash before eating or preparing food and after using the restroom. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) when clean water and soap isn't available.
- Avoid drinking untreated water; drink only bottled water or canned or bottled carbonated beverages. Do not consume ice and use bottled water to brush your teeth, do not allow water in your mouth in the shower.
- Avoid raw fruits and vegetables; raw produce may have been washed in unsafe water, avoid fruits and vegetables that you cannot peel, especially lettuce.
- Choose hot foods; avoid food that is stored or served at room temperature. Avoid street vendors.
- Prevent infecting others; take antibiotics and finish them, wash your hands often, do not handle food.

Resources:

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/typhoid-fever/basics/prevention/con-20028553>

<http://www.cdc.gov/typhoid-fever/sources.html>