



Salem/Cumberland County Health Department



TYPHOID FEVER

(PUBLIC HANDOUT)

What is typhoid fever?

Typhoid fever is a life-threatening illness caused by bacteria. In the United States about 400 cases occur each year, and 70% come from those traveling internationally.

What are the symptoms of typhoid fever?

- Sustained fever as high as 103-104 degrees
- Feel weak
- Stomach pains
- Headache
- Loss of appetite
- Rash of flat, rose-colored spots (in some cases)

The only way to know for sure if an illness is typhoid fever is to have samples of stool or blood tested for the bacteria that causes the illness.

How does typhoid fever spread?

The bacteria that cause typhoid fever only live in humans. People with typhoid fever carry the bacteria in their bloodstream and in their intestines. Also, a small number of persons, called carriers, recover from typhoid fever but



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continue to carry the bacteria. Both ill persons and carriers shed the bacteria in their stool.

You can get typhoid fever if you eat or drink beverages that have been handled by a person who is infected or if sewage contaminated with the bacteria gets into the water you use for drinking or washing food. Once the bacteria are eaten or drunk, they multiply and spread into the bloodstream. The body reacts with fever and other signs and symptoms.

Where in the world do you get typhoid fever?

Typhoid fever is common in most parts of the world except in regions like the United States, Canada, western Europe, Australia, and Japan. Therefore, if you are traveling to the developing world, you should consider taking precautions. Over the past 10 years, travelers from the United States to Asia, Africa, and Latin America have been especially at risk.

How can you avoid typhoid fever?

Two basic actions can protect you from typhoid fever:

1. Avoid risky foods and drinks.
2. Get vaccinated against typhoid fever.



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Watching what you eat and drink when you travel is as important as being vaccinated. This is because the vaccines are not completely effective. Avoiding risky foods will also help protect you from other illnesses.

“Boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it”

- ✓ If you drink water, buy it bottled or bring it to a rolling boil for 1 minute before you drink it.
- ✓ Ask for drinks without ice unless the ice is made from bottled or boiled water.
- ✓ Eat foods that have been thoroughly cooked and that are still hot and steaming.
- ✓ Avoid raw vegetables and fruits that cannot be peeled.
- ✓ When you eat raw fruit or vegetables that can be peeled, peel them yourself. (Wash your hands with soap first.)
Do not eat the peelings.
- ✓ Avoid foods and beverages from street vendors.

Getting vaccinated:

If you are traveling to a country where typhoid fever is common, you should consider being vaccinated. Visit a doctor or travel clinic to discuss your vaccination options.



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Remember that you will need to complete your vaccination at least 1 week before you travel so that the vaccine has time to take effect. Typhoid vaccination as lose their effectiveness after several years. If you have been vaccinated in the past, check with your doctor to see if it is time for a booster vaccination.

Can typhoid fever be treated?

Typhoid fever can be treated with antibiotics.

What do you do if you think you have typhoid fever?

If you think you have typhoid fever, see a doctor immediately. If you are traveling in a foreign country, you can usually call the U.S. consulate for a list of recommended doctors. You will probably be given an antibiotic to treat the disease.

Typhoid fever's danger doesn't end when symptoms disappear.

If the symptoms have disappeared, you still may be carrying the bacteria. If so, the illness could return, or you



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could pass the disease to other people. If you are being treated for typhoid fever, it is important to do the following:

- Keep taking the prescribed antibiotics for as long as the doctor has asked you to take them.
- Wash your hands carefully with soap and water after using the bathroom and do not prepare or serve food for other people.
- Have your doctor perform a series of stool cultures to make ensure that the bacteria no longer remain in your body.