



TYPHOID & PARATYPHOID FEVER

Information Sheet

What is typhoid and paratyphoid fever?

Typhoid and Paratyphoid are illnesses caused by the bacteria (germ) *Salmonella typhi* and *Salmonella paratyphi*. These infections occur worldwide but particularly in areas of poor sanitation and contaminated water supplies such as Asia, the Middle East, Central and South America, Pacific Islands and Africa. Typhoid is very common in Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. Almost all typhoid and paratyphoid cases in New Zealand are from overseas travel.

Typhoid and Paratyphoid Fever are notifiable diseases under the Health Act 1956. People suffering from the illness will be contacted by their local Health Protection Officer to try and establish the source of their illness.

How do you get typhoid or paratyphoid fever?

By eating food or water that is contaminated with the faeces or urine from a person who has the illness or who may be a carrier of the bacteria. In other countries contaminated drinking water, shellfish, raw fruits and vegetables, milk and milk products have been known to cause these illnesses.

What are the signs and symptoms of typhoid or paratyphoid fever?

Typhoid and paratyphoid infections usually begin with a fever. If the infection gets into the bloodstream it can cause an illness with fever, headache and possibly a rash.

If you get sick with typhoid you will get the symptoms usually in 8 to 14 days after being infected. With paratyphoid you will get the symptoms 1 to 10 days after being infected. The fever may last a week or more. Gastro-intestinal symptoms may not occur until 2-3 weeks into the illness and include abdominal pain, constipation and diarrhoea.

Treatment

Hospital admission is common. Antibiotics are recommended for patients who are very unwell to treat a fever or persistent diarrhoea and may be used for those who are employed on high risk occupations such as food handling, early childhood services or health care or children attending day care. Relapse after treatment does occur from time to time. If this occurs the you should see a GP.

Will I need time off school, childcare or work?

The Health Protection Officer from the MidCentral Public Health Service will advise on whether you or your family need to have tests. As a general rule:

- Anyone with diarrhoea, even if the reason is not known, should not go to work, school or day care until symptom free for 48 hours.
- Children should stay away from childcare or school until tests show they are free of the bacteria and clearance is given by the MidCentral Public Health Service.
- Adults whose job involves preparing food, working at a childcare centre, or in healthcare should not go back until three samples (taken more than 24 hours apart and after the end of any antibiotic treatment) show no signs of the typhoid/paratyphoid bacteria and clearance is given by the MidCentral Public Health Service.
- Close contacts of someone who is ill may need testing as well.

How is spread prevented?

- Wash and dry hands thoroughly after using the toilet or changing nappies. Hands should be washed for 20 seconds and dried for a further 20 seconds using a clean cloth or disposable towel.
- Soiled clothing and linen should be washed with hot soapy water separately from that of other family members. Items such as face cloths and towels should be kept for personal use.
- A person with typhoid infection should avoid preparing food for others in the family until they are no longer infectious. In households where a person is recovering from typhoid, toilet seats, flush handles, wash taps and toilet door handles should be disinfected daily using a hypochlorite based solution. Ideally the solution should be in contact with the surface of the object for at least ½ an hour.

How do I avoid the illness while travelling to countries where there is typhoid/paratyphoid fever?

- do not drink unsafe water, including ice and drinks mixed with water
- do not eat from street stalls
- ensure hot food is well cooked and eaten while still hot
- do not eat uncooked food including fruit and vegetables (unless you are able to peel them yourself) and uncooked seafood
- do not eat and drink unpasteurised milk or dairy foods
- drink bottled water or boil drinking water if you are unsure of its source or safety.

Tip: It is a good idea to see a travel doctor to discuss vaccination before you leave New Zealand. For helpful information for New Zealanders travelling to other countries visit www.safetravel.govt.nz.

What should I do if I think I have typhoid or paratyphoid?

- Visit your family doctor who will ask you where you have travelled and stayed. If your doctor thinks you have typhoid or paratyphoid they will ask for faeces or a blood sample for testing.

For further information please contact:



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