

Typhoid Fever Fact Sheet

What is Typhoid Fever?

Foodborne illness can be caused when contaminated water or food is eaten. Typhoid fever is a bacterial illness caused by *Salmonella Typhi* (*S. Typhi*).

What are the symptoms of typhoid fever infection?

Symptoms of typhoid fever may vary from mild illness to more severe symptoms such as a high fever, stomach pain, diarrhea or constipation, aches, headache, fatigue, loss of appetite, and sometimes a rash of flat, rose-colored spots. Symptoms of typhoid fever infection usually begin in 1 to 3 weeks, but may be as long as 2 months after exposure. The illness may take 2 to 4 weeks to resolve. While most infected individuals develop symptoms, some individuals, called carriers, may have no symptoms or only mild symptoms of typhoid fever.

Young children, the elderly, and people with weak immune systems are at especially high risk for the illness to progress to more severe complications including blood infections that can spread throughout the body's tissues and organs.

How is typhoid fever spread?

Typhoid fever is commonly spread person-to-person through the fecal-oral route. This means that contaminated stool from an infected person is somehow ingested by another person. For example, you can get typhoid fever if you eat food or drink beverages that have been handled by a person who is infected with *S. Typhi*. Ready-to-eat foods are frequently connected to outbreaks of typhoid fever. The illness is also commonly linked to untreated or sewage-contaminated drinking or irrigation water.

Typhoid fever spread through contaminated water or food can include:

- eating food prepared or served by an infected person who does not practice good personal hygiene, and,
- using, drinking, swimming in, or playing in untreated or sewage-contaminated water.

Why is typhoid fever important for child nutrition professionals?

People working with food who are sick with typhoid fever can easily make others ill. A sick child nutrition employee can contaminate the food he or she is handling. Many of those eating the contaminated food may become ill, resulting in an outbreak. People infected with typhoid fever are typically contagious for several weeks. It is important for people to always use good handwashing and other hygienic practices, especially after they have recently recovered from typhoid fever.

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How can typhoid fever be prevented?

While typhoid fever is more common in areas of the world where handwashing is less frequent and water is likely to be contaminated with sewage, we can prevent this illness by following these guidelines:

- Wash your hands thoroughly after using the restroom or changing diapers and before preparing or eating food.
- Avoid bare hand contact with ready-to-eat and ready-to-serve foods.
- Report symptoms of diarrhea and vomiting, diagnosis of typhoid fever, or exposure within the past 14 days to others with typhoid fever to your manager and/or director. Do not work when you have these symptoms.
- Use potable (clean) water for handwashing, cleaning, and sanitizing food contact surfaces and washing produce.
- Ensure all foods are purchased from a safe supplier.
- Cook foods thoroughly and use a thermometer to test for “doneness.”

This fact sheet is part of a series of six fact sheets on foodborne illness control and prevention.

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