

## TYPHOID FEVER Q&A

### ***What is typhoid fever?***

Typhoid fever is a bacterial infection of the intestinal tract and the bloodstream. It is an uncommon disease with 10 or fewer cases occurring in Georgia each year. Most cases are acquired during foreign travel. The germ that causes typhoid is a unique human strain of salmonella called *Salmonella Typhi*. Outbreaks are rare.

### ***Who gets typhoid fever?***

Anyone can get typhoid fever, but the greatest risk exists for travelers visiting countries where the disease is common. Occasionally, cases can be traced to exposure to a local person who is a chronic carrier.

### ***How are the bacteria spread?***

*Salmonella Typhi* bacteria are present in the bloodstream, intestinal tract and urinary tract of infected persons. The bacteria are spread by eating foods or drinking water contaminated by feces or urine from an infected individual. Some people recover from the illness but continue to carry the bacteria. These individuals are “carriers.” They can continue to pass the disease on to other people, even though they no longer show any signs or symptoms of illness.

### ***What are the symptoms of typhoid fever?***

Symptoms range from mild to severe. They may include fever, weakness, headache, stomach pains, constipation or diarrhea, and loss of appetite. Death occurs in less than 1 percent of patients who receive prompt antibiotic treatment.

### ***How soon do symptoms appear?***

Symptoms generally appear one to two weeks after exposure, but the range can be 3 days to one month.

### ***For how long can an infected person spread the typhoid bacteria?***

The infection can spread as long as the bacteria remain in the stool. The carrier state varies from a number of days to years. Only 2-5% of cases become permanent carriers. Persons being treated for typhoid fever should take the full course of antibiotics prescribed by a doc-

tor. Infected persons should wash their hands carefully with soap and water after using the bathroom, and they should not prepare or serve food for other people. Finally, a doctor should perform a series of stool cultures to make certain that no *Salmonella typhi* bacteria remain in the body. Persons with jobs that involve handling food or caring for small children may be barred legally from going back to work until it is certain that they no longer carry any typhoid bacteria.

### ***How is typhoid treated?***

Specific antibiotics are often used to treat cases of typhoid fever. Persons given antibiotics usually begin to feel better within 2-3 days, and deaths rarely occur.

### ***How can typhoid fever be prevented?***

If you are traveling to a country where typhoid is common, consider getting vaccinated. Visit a doctor or travel clinic to discuss your vaccination options. Strict attention to food and water precautions while traveling to such countries is the most effective prevention method. A good rule to follow is “**Boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it!**” Observe the following precautions:

- Drink only boiled or bottled water. Other safe drinks include tea and coffee made with boiled water and carbonated, bottled beverages with no ice.
- Eat only thoroughly cooked foods that are still hot.
- Peel fruits and raw vegetables yourself. Do not eat the peelings.
- Avoid undercooked or raw fish or shellfish.
- Eat only cooked vegetables and avoid salads.
- Avoid foods and beverages from street vendors.

***Where can I get additional information on typhoid fever?***

Contact the Georgia Division of Public Health, Epidemiology Branch, by email at

[gaepinfo@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:gaepinfo@dhr.state.ga.us). The following web site may be useful:

CDC Typhoid Fact Sheet – [http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/typhoidfever\\_g.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/typhoidfever_g.htm)

