

Overview

Typhoid fever is a life-threatening systemic infection caused by the bacterium *Salmonella Typhi*. It is primarily a disease of the digestive tract but can spread to the bloodstream and other organs. It is most common in parts of the world where water sanitation and handwashing are infrequent. Once the bacteria are ingested, they multiply and spread from the intestines into the bloodstream, causing a prolonged and severe fever.

Symptoms

Symptoms usually appear 1 to 2 weeks after exposure and often get worse over several days:

- **Fever:** A signature "stepwise" fever that starts low and increases daily, potentially reaching 104°F (40°C).
- **Gastrointestinal issues:** Severe abdominal pain, loss of appetite, and either constipation or "pea-soup" diarrhea.
- **Rose Spots:** A faint, pink-colored rash consisting of small spots, usually appearing on the chest or abdomen.
- **General Malaise:** Severe headache, generalized weakness and fatigue, muscle aches, and sweating.
- **Advanced Stages:** If untreated, patients may enter a "typhoid state," lying motionless and exhausted with eyes half-closed (delirium).

Causes

Typhoid is caused by *Salmonella Typhi* bacteria. It does not have an animal reservoir; it only spreads between humans. It is transmitted through the "fecal-oral" route:

- **Contaminated Water:** Drinking water or using ice made from water contaminated with infected sewage.
- **Contaminated Food:** Eating food handled by someone who is shedding the bacteria (even if they don't look sick) and hasn't washed their hands properly.
- **Raw Produce:** Eating fruits or vegetables washed in contaminated water.

When to See a Doctor

Typhoid requires prompt antibiotic treatment to prevent fatal complications. See a doctor immediately if you have a persistent high fever and have recently traveled to a region where typhoid is common. **Emergency care** is needed if you experience:

- Signs of intestinal perforation (sudden, severe abdominal pain and a rigid belly).
- Bloody stools or vomiting blood.
- Severe confusion or inability to stay awake.

Home Remedies / Prevention Care

- **Safe Water Practices:** Drink only bottled water or water that has been boiled for at least one minute. Avoid tap water and ice cubes.
- **Food Hygiene:** Follow the rule: "Boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it." Avoid raw salads and street food served at room temperature.
- **Handwashing:** Wash hands vigorously with soap and warm water after using the bathroom and before handling any food.
- **Vaccination:** If traveling to high-risk areas, get the typhoid vaccine (either an injection or oral capsules) at least 1-2 weeks before departure.
- **Hydration:** Drink plenty of fluids (water, broth, ORS) to prevent dehydration from fever and diarrhea.