

## Typhoid

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**Last updated:** 27 November 2007

### What is Typhoid?

Typhoid is caused by an infection with bacteria called *Salmonella Typhi*. In Australia, most typhoid infections are acquired overseas and occur after eating contaminated food or water in countries where typhoid is common. This infection is not the same infection with *Salmonella*.

### What are the symptoms?

People infected with typhoid may experience mild or severe symptoms. The symptoms of typhoid fever may include fever, headache, general discomfort, lack of appetite, and a dry cough. The heartbeat slows and the spleen enlarges. Some people get rose spots on the trunk of the body. Constipation or diarrhoea may occur. Symptoms start 1 to 3 weeks after infection. Some people do not have any symptoms.

### How is it spread?

In Australia, typhoid is usually acquired in developing countries such as Indonesia and countries of the Indian subcontinent. Most people get typhoid fever by eating or drinking food or water that has been contaminated by people with the disease, including by those who do not have any symptoms. Raw fruits and vegetables, milk, and shellfish are the types of foods most often associated with illness.

### Who is at risk?

Everyone can be infected with typhoid, however there is a vaccine available and travellers to countries where typhoid is common

should be vaccinated. Travel advice is available from the Centers of Disease Control ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)).

Household contacts, or people who have travelled with a person infected with typhoid, will be screened for typhoid by their local public health unit. Contacts should be aware of the symptoms of typhoid and should see their general practitioner if they develop symptoms.

### How is it prevented?

People travelling in developing countries should be vaccinated prior to travel and:

- avoid uncooked foods, including fruit unless it is able to be peeled
- avoid untreated water, including ice
- drink beverages from sealed containers
- wash their hands after going to the toilet and before eating
- avoid eating from street stalls
- ensure hot food is thoroughly cooked and eaten whilst hot.

Vaccination is not recommended for travel in Australia.

People infected with typhoid, or who share a house with someone infected with typhoid, **MUST NOT** work if their work involves food handling or caring for children, patients or the elderly, and should not prepare food for others. A number of stool tests will be required to assess when you are no longer infected with typhoid. Your local public health unit will advise you when are able to return to work.

People who have been potentially exposed to the same source, for example overseas travel, will also be advised not to work if their work involves food handling or caring for children, patients or the elderly. They will also need their stools tested.

Because typhoid can be carried on the hands it is very important to always wash hands thoroughly after using the toilet and before preparing food. Hands should be washed with soap and water for at least 15 seconds, rinsed and dried well.

### How is it diagnosed?

To diagnose typhoid, your general practitioner or local hospital will send a blood or stool sample to a laboratory for testing.

### How is it treated?

People with typhoid may require hospitalisation and will need antibiotics for treatment. Some people may never have

symptoms but may be carriers of typhoid. Antibiotic treatment is required to treat carriers also.

### **What is the public health response?**

- Doctors, hospitals and laboratories must notify cases of typhoid to the local public health unit.
- Public health unit staff will interview the doctor or patient (or carers) to find out how the infection occurred.
- The NSW Food Authority, in collaboration with NSW Health, is responsible for the environmental investigation of food handlers with typhoid.
- Your local public health unit can advise further regarding exclusions from work and school. People excluded from work will need to have a number of stool tests done before they are allowed to return to work.

## Further information - Public Health Units in NSW

For more information please contact your doctor, local public health unit or community health centre - look under NSW Government at the front of the White Pages

Metropolitan Areas	Location	Number	Rural Areas	Location	Number
Northern Sydney/Central Coast	Hornsby	02 9477 9400	Greater Southern	Goulburn	02 4824 1837
	Gosford	02 4349 4845		Albury	02 6080 8900
South Eastern Sydney/Illawarra	Randwick	02 9382 8333	Greater Western	Broken Hill	08 8080 1499
	Wollongong	02 4221 6700		Dubbo	02 6841 5569
Sydney South West	Camperdown	02 9515 9420		Bathurst	02 6339 5601
Sydney West	Penrith	02 4734 2022	Hunter/New England	Newcastle	02 4924 6477
	Parramatta	02 9840 3603		Tamworth	02 6767 8630
Justice Health Service	Matraville	02 9311 2707	North Coast	Port Macquarie	02 6588 2750
				Lismore	02 6620 7500

See full details of Public Health Units at

[www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/infectious/phus.asp](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/infectious/phus.asp)