

Typhoid fever and paratyphoid fever

County Medical Officers' infection prevention sheet, patient information

What are typhoid fever and paratyphoid fever?

Typhoid fever and paratyphoid fever are illnesses caused by special types of the salmonella intestinal bacterium. The symptoms are normally high fever, general malaise and sometimes diarrhoea. It is also possible to be a carrier of the infection while exhibiting no symptoms at all. The infection is generally treated with antibiotics.

How is the disease transmitted, and when are carriers infectious?

The infection is normally transmitted via contaminated food or drink. The bacteria are destroyed by heating, which is why food which is well boiled or fried does not generally present a risk. Remember that cooked food can be contaminated by kitchen utensils or chopping boards which have not been cleaned, for example. Deep freezing does not destroy the bacterium. Most people have been infected with it abroad.

Contaminated fingers after toilet contact, for example, may cause person-to-person transmission. This is why it is important to take care with hand and toilet hygiene. If you work in healthcare/nursing or with food, it is particularly important for you to remain at home until the diarrhoea has passed and your faeces are normal.

Anyone who is free of symptoms can often remain at work or school by following the rules of conduct and hygiene advice below. However, some professions require redeployment or suspension until you are deemed to be free of infection.

What should you remember so as not to infect others? Rules of conduct and hygiene advice:

- You must not work when you have diarrhoea.
- Wash your hands thoroughly after visiting the toilet, before handling foods and before meals.
- Use liquid soap and your own towel or single-use towels.
- Keep the toilet and washbasin clean.
- If children in nappies are carriers of the disease, wash your hands thoroughly after changing their nappies. Keep your changing table very clean. Place used nappies in plastic bags which are then discarded with the rest of your refuse.
- You must not swim in a pool while you have diarrhoea.
- Children must not go to preschool until they have submitted three stool samples containing no typhoid or paratyphoid bacteria.
- If you work with unpackaged foods, according to European food legislation you are obliged to notify your supervisor immediately if you are infectious.

People in the following risk professions are obliged to submit three stool samples, and they must be redeployed or suspended until they are deemed by their doctor to be free of infection:

- Anyone who prepares or handles unpackaged foods in a professional capacity
- Anyone who cares for infants or severely immunocompromised patients in a professional capacity

Typhoid fever and paratyphoid fever are what are known as public health hazards according to the Swedish Communicable Diseases Act.

Therefore, you are obliged to follow the rules of conduct given to you by your doctor and to assist with contact tracing which aims to locate the source of the infection or other people who may have been infected.

You may request reassessment of the rules of conduct by the County Medical Officer in your county. You must follow the rules assigned to you before any such assessment is complete.