Typhoid Fever and Paratyphoid Fever

Community and Public Health

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**Typhoid fever** is a serious and sometimes life-threatening illness caused by *Salmonella typhi* bacteria. There were 38 to 43 cases of typhoid in NZ from 2014 to 2016. There are an estimated 22 million cases of typhoid worldwide each year.

**Paratyphoid fever** is a bacterial disease similar to but less severe than typhoid fever. It is caused by the bacteria *Salmonella paratyphi A, B* and *C*. There were 19-34 cases of paratyphoid in New Zealand from 2014 to 2016. There are an estimated 6 million cases of paratyphoid worldwide each year.

Most cases are acquired while overseas particularly in southern and eastern Asia. Other at-risk countries include other parts of Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and Central and South America.

**What are the symptoms?**

Affected persons usually have a sustained fever as high as 39° or 40° C. They may also feel weak, or have stomach pains, headache, or loss of appetite. Some patients have a rash comprised of flat, rose-coloured spots in. The only way to know for sure if an illness is typhoid or paratyphoid fever is to have samples of faeces/poo or blood tested.

Complications include bleeding from and rupture of the bowel, infection of the heart muscle and infection of the nervous system. Liver and gallbladder infection may cause jaundice and abdominal pain. Kidney failure is uncommon. Typhoid (much less commonly paratyphoid fever) can be fatal if left untreated.

**How are they caught and spread?**

Both typhoid and paratyphoid fever can be acquired from food or drink that have been handled and contaminated by a person who is shedding the bacteria or from contaminated sewage that gets into the water used for drinking or washing food.

The typhoid bacteria and Paratyphi *A* that causes paratyphoid fever live only in humans. Paratyphi *B* and *C* can be found in domestic animals. Persons carry the bacteria in their bloodstream and intestinal tract. A small number of persons who have been infected and recover form these illnesses continue to carry the bacteria in their intestinal tract. Both ill persons and carriers shed the bacteria in their faeces/poo.

**How are they treated?**

A person with either typhoid or paratyphoid fever is treated with antibiotics and usually admitted to hospital.

It is important to keep taking the prescribed antibiotics for as long as the doctor has requested.

Hands should be carefully washed with soap and water after using the toilet, and a person with either disease must not prepare or serve food for other people. This will lower the chance of passing the infection on to someone else.

**Can they be prevented?**

- Avoid risky foods and drinks.
- Get vaccinated against typhoid fever if travelling to a country where the disease is prevalent. There is no vaccination against paratyphoid fever.

It is just as important to be careful about what you eat and drink when you travel as it is to be vaccinated against typhoid. Avoiding risky foods will also help protect from paratyphoid fever and other illnesses, including travellers’ diarrhoea, cholera, dysentery, and hepatitis A.

Eat foods that have been thoroughly cooked and that are still hot and steaming. Avoid raw vegetables and fruits that cannot be peeled. When you eat raw fruit or vegetables that can be peeled, peel them yourself. Avoid foods and beverages from street vendors.

If you drink water, buy it bottled or bring it to a rolling boil for 1 minute before you drink it. Ask for drinks without ice unless the ice is made from bottled or boiled water.

Follow the this advice when travelling: **Boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it.**

**Time away from work or school**

Affected people who work in occupations at high risk of transmitting the disease to others or who attend preschool or school need to stay at home until given clearance by Community and Public Health. Close contacts who are in these situations also need to stay away until given clearance.

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