What is Salmonella Typhi?

Salmonella Typhi is a strain of bacteria that lives only in humans. It causes a bacterial infection of the intestinal tract and occasionally the bloodstream which is called typhoid fever. It is uncommon in the United States with most cases acquired during foreign travel to underdeveloped countries.

What are the symptoms of Salmonella Typhi?

Symptoms of Salmonella Typhi infection start 3 days to 2 months (usually 8 to 14 days) after exposure which may be mild to severe and can include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Tiredness
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Rose-colored spots on the trunk

How is Salmonella Typhi spread?

Salmonella Typhi bacteria are shed in the urine or stool of infected persons, including chronic carriers. Salmonella Typhi is spread by eating or drinking contaminated food or water or by contact with stool from infected persons.

For how long can an infected person carry Salmonella Typhi?

About 10% of untreated patients may shed infectious bacteria in their stool up to 3 months after onset of symptoms and small number may become permanent shedders. These permanent shedders are called chronic carriers.

Can typhoid fever be treated?

Patients with symptoms of Salmonella Typhi infection or their contacts should immediately seek medical attention. The infection can be effectively treated with antibiotic therapy. Several new drugs have produced excellent results in the treatment for carriers, but follow-up cultures are necessary to confirm cure.

Do infected people need to be isolated or excluded from work or school?

Patients with Salmonella Typhi should be excluded from all work involving food handling, day care providers, or health care until their doctor or local health department performs a series of stool cultures to ensure that no Salmonella Typhi bacteria remain in their body.
Should contacts to infected persons be tested?

Household and close contacts should be excluded from high-risk occupations (i.e., foodhandlers, day care workers, and healthcare professionals) until their doctor or local health department performs a series of stool cultures to ensure that they have not been infected with Salmonella Typhi.

How can Salmonella Typhi infection be prevented?

When traveling to underdeveloped countries where Salmonella Typhi infection is common, avoid risky foods and drinks (uncooked foods, non-bottled water or drinks made with ice). To prevent yourself and others from getting Salmonella Typhi you must wash your hands:

- after using the bathroom
- before and after making food
- before eating

A vaccine is available to prevent infection with Salmonella Typhi prior to traveling. Further information is available through health care providers or the local health department.