

## Typhoid fever: A guide for parents

Dear Parent,

There has been one incidence of typhoid fever at OIS. While the child's parents have consulted a doctor and taken other precautions, we would like to share some guidelines and precautionary steps for you to consider for your child as well.

Please go through this letter and call us, or write to us, in case there are any further questions or if you require further information. You can call 6130-3535 and ask to speak to me or any of the other physicians, or reach Shivani Dawlatjada at [shivani.dawlatjada@healthspring.in](mailto:shivani.dawlatjada@healthspring.in).

### What is typhoid fever?

Typhoid fever and paratyphoid fever are serious illnesses. They occur most often in developing countries where sanitation is poor. Typhoid fever is caused by eating foods or drinking beverages contaminated with the Salmonella bacteria. Contamination can occur from:

- Food or drinks handled by someone who is sick with typhoid fever
- Food or drinks handled by someone who has no symptoms but carries the bacteria
- Sewage contamination of water or food
- Unpasteurized dairy products
- Unrefrigerated poultry products

Factors that increase your risk of typhoid fever include:

- Drinking contaminated water
- Eating raw shellfish
- Eating fruits and vegetables that are raw or have been washed with contaminated water
- Living in poor sanitation

### How do you know if your child is infected?

The incubation period is usually 1-2 weeks, and the duration of the illness is about 3-4 weeks. Symptoms include:

- Poor appetite
- Headaches
- Generalized aches and pains
- Fever as high as 104 degrees F
- Lethargy
- Diarrhoea

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- Intestinal infections, perforation, pneumonias, encephalitis or meningitis may also occur if the disease is not treated.

If you have any doubts, please visit your family physician or stop by a Healthspring centre to speak with a Healthspring physician.

### **How do children typically contract typhoid fever?**

Typhoid fever is contracted by drinking or eating the bacteria in contaminated food or water. People with acute illness can contaminate the surrounding water supply through stool, which contains a high concentration of the bacteria. Contamination of the water supply can, in turn, taint the food supply. The bacteria can survive for weeks in water or dried sewage.

### **What should you do if your child contracts typhoid fever?**

Typhoid fever is treated with antibiotics that kill the Salmonella bacteria. Prior to the use of antibiotics, the fatality rate was 20%. Medications should be given only after confirmation of diagnosis and under a doctor's guidance.

Uncomplicated cases can be treated on an outpatient basis, with a 2 week course of second generation cephalosporins. Complicated cases would need hospitalization.

### **What are the investigations required in case typhoid fever is suspected?**

Diagnosis is clinical depending on the symptoms:

- Complete blood count
- Blood culture in the first week
- Rapid tests like IgM for typhoid fever
- Widal test after 7 days of fever
- Stool culture in the third week of fever

### **When is your child ready to go back to school?**

The patient can go back to school after 3-4 weeks, of which 2 weeks would comprise the treatment.

### **How can you protect your child from contracting typhoid fever?**

The typhoid vaccine can prevent one from getting typhoid fever. It needs to be taken every 3 years and is widely available.

Apart from the vaccine, there are some basic things that one can take care of in order to avoid the condition:

- Do not eat food cooked on the roadside. This is because it is very difficult to judge the water source used and the cleanliness of the food handler.



- Do not have ice or popsicles prepared locally. Since the water source and cleanliness of the manufacturing facility is unknown, it is best avoided.
- Do not eat fruits and raw vegetables that have been pre-cut.
- One must make sure they wash their hands well before cooking a meal or eating.
- Always drink either bottled water or boiled water. It is essential that the water is brought to a rolling boil. This means that the water reaches a boiling point and is allowed to boil for about two to three minutes.

We hope this answers your questions; please be assured that Oberoi International School and Healthspring are vigilant, and will help keep your child healthy. Please do feel free to reach out to us if you have any more questions.

Dr. Khullar  
Paediatrician, Healthspring

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