



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

CORPORATE COMMUNICATION SERVICES

Natalia, 330 Longmarket Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201
Private Bag X9051, Pietermaritzburg, 3200
Tel.: 033 395 2220, Fax.: 033 3420429
thusim@dohho.kzntl.gov.za

TO: ALL MEDIA

DATE: 25 OCTOBER 2005

EMBARGO: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA STATEMENT: TYPHOID

Two people have died at Nongoma in northern KwaZulu-Natal after showing signs and symptoms of typhoid. At this point in time laboratory tests are being conducted and whether the deceased had typhoid is subject to confirmation.

The Provincial Department of Health would like to assure the public that there is no cause for alarm as cases of typhoid are usually expected around this time of the year. Typhoid is endemic to KwaZulu-Natal and the province sees just under 20 cases every year. These cases are isolated. The Provincial Department of Health's Environmental Health and Communicable Disease Control teams have been alerted and Environmental Health Officers have been sent out to the area to conduct community health education on the importance of personal hygiene.

What are the causes, symptoms and treatment for typhoid fever? How would the fever spread? Who are generally more at risk of contacting the disease?

Typhoid fever is contracted when people eat food or drink water that has been infected with *Salmonella typhi*. It is recognized by the sudden onset of sustained fever, severe headache, nausea and severe loss of appetite. It is sometimes accompanied by hoarse cough and constipation or diarrhoea

Identification

Typhoid fever is caused by *Salmonella typhi*, the typhoid bacillus. At present, there are 107 different strains of the bacteria. Typhoid fever is characterized by the sudden onset of sustained fever, severe headache, nausea, severe loss of appetite, constipation or sometimes diarrhoea. Severe forms have been described with mental dullness and meningitis. Case-fatality rates of 10% can be reduced to less than 1% with appropriate antibiotic therapy.



Paratyphoid fever **can be caused by any of three variations or bio sero types of *S. enteritidis Paratyphi A, B and C***. It is similar in its symptoms to typhoid fever, but tends to be milder, with a much lower case fatality rate.

Transmission

Typhoid fever is transmitted by food and water contaminated by the faeces and urine of patients and carriers. Polluted water is the most common source of typhoid. In addition, shellfish taken from sewage-contaminated beds, vegetables fertilized by night soil and eaten raw, contaminated milk and milk products have been shown as a source of infection.

Communicability

People can transmit the disease as long as the bacteria remain in their system; most people are infectious prior to and during the first week of convalescence. About 10% of untreated patients will discharge bacteria for up to three months; 2 to 5% of untreated patients will become permanent carriers.

Prevention

- **Protect and chlorinate** public water supplies. Provide safe water supplies and avoid possible back flow connections between sewers and water supplies.
- **Dispose of human faeces** in a sanitary manner and maintain fly-proof latrines.
- **Cleanliness in food preparation** and handling should be maintained.
- **Educate the public** regarding the **importance of hand washing**: this is important for food handlers and attendants involved in the care of patients and/or children. Thorough and frequent hand washing is essential, especially after a bowel movement.

What do you do if you think you have typhoid fever?

If you suspect you have typhoid fever, see a doctor immediately

In the light of the situation in Mpumalanga and more recently in Gauteng, is KZN at risk of a typhoid outbreak?, If so would our hospitals be prepared for it and how so?

Typhoid is endemic in KwaZulu-Natal. We get sporadic cases of the disease every year. All hospitals are equipped to diagnose and treat typhoid.

ENDS

For more information please contact Lindiwe Khuzwayo on 083 393 9943 or Desmond Motha on 083 295 3901.