



Indiana State Department of Health

Epidemiology Resource Center

Quick Facts

About...Typhus

What is typhus?

Typhus is the name given to a disease caused by the germ, *Rickettsia prowazekii* or *Rickettsia typhi*. These germs can infect both animals and people. Cases are rare in Indiana.

How is typhus spread?

Typhus is spread by the bite of flea or tick. Fleas and ticks catch these germs from small mammals such as squirrels. The fleas and ticks then give the germ to humans by feeding on blood.

Who is at risk for typhus?

Anyone who works or plays outside or in buildings where there are fleas and ticks can catch typhus.

How do I know if I have typhus?

You cannot tell without seeing your doctor. Your doctor will give you an exam, ask you questions, and take blood for a lab test to see if you have typhus.

People with typhus first show signs 1-2 weeks after a flea or tick bite. These signs may be:

- Fever
- Bad headache
- Body aches
- Rash

How can typhus be treated?

Typhus can be treated with medicine from your doctor.

How is typhus be prevented?

Avoid flea and tick bites:

- Walk on cleared trails and stay in the center of the trail.
- Avoid contact with leaf litter, brush, and overgrown grass.
- Wear light colored long pants with cuffs tucked into sock and long sleeves when walking in grassy or wooded areas. It is easier to spot ticks on light colored clothing.
- Put insect repellent containing DEET on cloths, socks, and shoes, and exposed skin.
- Permethrin (Permanone) will keep ticks off clothes and shoes but should not be applied to skin.
- Check every 2 hours for ticks on clothes or exposed skin.
- After outdoor activity, brush off clothing and body. Inspect clothes and body for ticks, particularly in the areas of the groin, back of neck and knees, and armpits.
- Take a hot shower and wash clothes in hot water.
- Check your hiking gear and pets for ticks as well.

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information, please refer to: <http://www.cdc.gov/other spotted fever/>

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