



A closeup of Salmonella typhi the bacteria that cause Typhoid.

## Typhoid outbreak in Fiji

Typhoid fever is one of the major public health issues in Fiji. The numbers of reported cases has increased since 2004. Although most cases were reported in the Northern division, cases have also been reported throughout the country.

After an outbreak of Typhoid was noticed in the Jitu State settlement in Suva in February this year, epidemiologists and environmental specialists from the World Health Organisation (WHO) and Fiji Ministry of Health were sent to investigate.

The investigation found that most of the settlement's inhabitants used pit latrines and that waste from these latrines went directly into drains without any treatment by septic tanks. Results of samples collected from the drain and nearby creek found that all of the water was contaminated. It is assumed that this contaminated water caused the disease both directly and indirectly.

Fiji has many issues with water supply, especially in rural areas. However, even when treated water is provided, good personal hygiene practices, such as properly washing hands or ensuring water tanks are not contaminated, are often missing.

To improve hygiene and sanitation systems to prevent the disease, many interventions have been done through government action plans. It is important to continuously implement these activities by working closely with all stakeholders.

## What is Typhoid?

Typhoid fever is an infectious disease caused by the bacteria; *Salmonella typhi*. Once the bacteria enter a person's body, it multiplies and spreads from the intestines into the bloodstream.

Typhoid fever is a water borne disease, which spreads from direct contact with water contaminated with excrement from an infected person. The disease is mainly transmitted via unsafe drinking water, food, and inadequate sewage disposal. The lack of a safe water supply, poor hygiene and poor waste water disposal can all cause the disease.

Ensuring that water is clean, food properly prepared, and good hygiene and sanitation (especially proper sewage disposal) practices can help prevent the spread of the disease.



Women at Dratabu village in Nadi boil water to prevent typhoid. ©Fiji Times