

## Shiga-Toxin

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### What is Shiga Toxin?

Toxins are small molecules or proteins produced by certain bacteria that are capable of causing disease. Shiga toxin is produced by more than one type of bacteria causing illness that can range from mild intestinal disease to severe kidney complications.

### What are the symptoms?

Symptoms usually begin 3-5 days after exposure but can range from 1 to 8 days, and may include:

- Sudden onset of watery and/or bloody diarrhea
- Severe abdominal cramping
- Vomiting
- Low-grade fever

Most often the illness is mild and self-limited generally lasting 1-3 days.

### How is it spread?

- Eating raw or undercooked ground beef and other meats (poultry, pork and lamb).
- Consuming raw milk or milk products.
- Eating contaminated fruits and vegetables.
- When hands, food, water or objects (toys, etc.) become contaminated with infected stool and then gets into someone's mouth.
- Contact with an infected animal and/or its stool.
- Not washing hands after using the bathroom, changing diapers.
- Swallowing contaminated water (e.g. lakes, rivers, springs, streams, ponds, swimming pools).

### Who gets Shiga Toxin infection?

Anyone can get Shiga Toxin. Infants, young children, the elderly, and those immunocompromised are at greater risk of developing complications such as Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS).

### What should I do if I have symptoms?

Contact your healthcare provider.

### How is Shiga Toxin diagnosed?

By testing a stool sample.

### How is Shiga Toxin treated?

- Most people who have healthy immune systems will recover without treatment.
- Antidiarrheal medications such as Imodium are not recommended.

### How can I prevent the spread of Shiga Toxin?

- Wash your hands with warm, soapy water for 20 seconds:
  - After using the bathroom or changing diapers.
  - After contact with animals or their environments (petting zoos, farms, fairs).
  - Before eating or preparing foods.
  - After handling raw meat.
- Assist young children with hand washing.
- Properly dispose of dirty diapers.
- Cook ground beef to 160°F.
- Prevent cross contamination in the kitchen.
  - Use separate cutting boards for meats and other foods.
  - Clean and sanitize cutting boards, counter tops, and utensils.
- Do not prepare food for others if you have diarrhea.
- Wash and/or peel raw fruits and vegetables.
- Do not consume raw milk, milk products, or unpasteurized juices.
- Do not swallow water when swimming.
- Do not swim while you have diarrhea and for two week after your diarrhea stops.
- Do not send your child to daycare or preschool if he/she has diarrhea.
- Do not go to work if you are a health care worker, food handler, or day care worker having diarrhea. Please notify the health department of your illness.

### For further information visit:

- [www.foodsafety.gov](http://www.foodsafety.gov)
- <http://www.cdc.gov>

**Report Shiga-toxin cases to Saint Louis County Department of Health by calling 314 615 1630**