

## Shigellosis (*Shigella* infection)

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### What is shigellosis?

Shigellosis is a bacterial infection of the intestines. It is highly contagious and can cause severe infections requiring hospitalization.

### What are the symptoms?

Illness usually begins 1 to 4 days after swallowing the bacteria and may last 4 to 7 days.

Symptoms may include:

- Diarrhea - watery and/or bloody
- Fever
- Stomach cramps
- Nausea and vomiting
- Severe cases may cause dehydration (i.e. loss of fluids) or convulsions in young children.
- Sometimes people have few or no symptoms at all but can still pass the bacteria to others.

### How is it spread?

- *Shigella* is found in the stool (bowel movement) of infected persons.
- It spreads when hands, food, water or objects (toys, etc.) become contaminated with the stool of an infected person and then get into someone else's mouth (e.g. when an infected person does not wash hands well after using the bathroom).
- Swallowing recreational water contaminated with *Shigella* (e.g. lakes, rivers, swimming pools).
- Not washing hands after using the bathroom or changing diapers.

### Who gets shigellosis?

Anyone can get shigellosis but the following are at greater risk of being infected:

- Children in day care centers
- Family members and playmates of children infected with *Shigella*
- Travelers to certain foreign countries
- Institutionalized people
- Men having sex with men

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

- Do not send your child to daycare or preschool if he or she has diarrhea.
- Don't go to work if you are a healthcare worker, food handler or a daycare worker.
- Contact your healthcare provider.
- Wash your hands often.
- Avoid preparing food for others.

### How is shigellosis diagnosed?

- *Shigella* is identified from a stool culture test.

### How is shigellosis treated?

- In some cases antibiotics may be prescribed.
- Persons with milder illness may recover on their own.
- Anti-diarrhea medications should not be used to treat *Shigella* infection.

### How can I prevent the spread of shigellosis?

- Wash your hands with warm, soapy water for 20 seconds:
  - After using the bathroom
  - After changing diapers
  - Before eating
  - Before preparing food
- Wash your hands more often when someone in the household is sick.
- Supervise/assist children to be sure they are properly washing their hands.
- Clean & disinfect surfaces immediately after vomiting or diarrheal accidents.
- Properly dispose of soiled diapers.
- People with diarrhea should not use public swimming areas until one week after symptoms end.

**Report *Shigella* cases to Saint Louis  
County Department of Health by calling  
314 615 1630**

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### IMPORTANT

**Missouri State Regulations require health departments to restrict the activities of persons with Shigellosis in certain settings. Food handlers, children and staff in day care settings, and health care workers must obtain the approval of the local health department before returning to their routine activities.**