

FACT SHEET

Shigella

Shigella is a group of bacteria that causes intestinal illnesses called shigellosis. There are four different species (with more than 40 serotypes) that result in more or less severity. *Shigella* is found worldwide. Each year in the United States *Shigella* causes about 500,000 cases of diarrhea. <http://www.cdc.gov/shigella/general-information.html>

Symptoms: Within a couple days after being infected *Shigella* symptoms begin with loose watery stools which may or may not be mucous or blood. Additional symptoms include abdominal pain, stomach cramps, fever and tenesmus (a painful urge to pass stools when bowels are empty). Some people infected with *Shigella* have no symptoms at all and can pass the bacteria to others. In normally healthy people symptoms usually resolve within 5-7 days.

Spread: *Shigella* is transmitted by fecal-oral route. It is found in the stool (feces) of infected people, in food or water contaminated by an infected person and sexual contact with infected individuals. People can become infected with *Shigella* by eating food or drinking liquids contaminated by an infected person, touching contaminated surfaces or objects and then touching their mouth or putting a contaminated object into their mouth, swallowing recreational water contaminated with *Shigella* (lakes, streams, pools, hot tubs, etc.), and not washing hands after using the bathroom or changing diapers and then eating foods. Shigellosis often occurs in toddlers who are not fully toilet-trained. Family members and playmates of children infected with *Shigella* are at high risk of becoming infected as it can spread easily in environments such as day care facilities.

Incubation: Symptoms usually begin 1 to 3 days after being exposed to *Shigella*.

Contagious Period: An infected person is contagious until the organism is not present in his/her stool. For most people this will be for one to two weeks, rarely does it exceed four weeks. Certain antibiotics may shorten this period.

Reportable: Within seven days by the Provider or Lab to the state or local health department.

Diagnosis and Treatment: Antibiotic treatment for shigellosis may be available from your health care provider. People with mild symptoms usually recover on their own without treatment.

Prevention:Prevention of *Shigella* infections:

- Strict attention to hand washing is key to limiting the spread. Wash your hands with warm, soapy water for 20 seconds after using the bathroom, after changing diapers, and before eating; wash your hands more often when someone in your household is sick. Supervise young children to be sure they are properly washing their hands.
- Do not send your child to daycare or preschool if he or she has diarrhea.
- Ill children and staff should not be permitted to return to the child care facility until 24 or more hours after diarrhea has ceased and one or more stool samples collected 24 hours apart test negative.
- Avoid preparing food for others while you have symptoms.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces with household bleach immediately after vomiting or diarrheal accidents.
- Swimming: do not swallow water or get water in your mouth while swimming, take a shower before swimming, do not swim when you have diarrhea, take kids on frequent bathroom breaks while swimming, and change diapers in changing rooms, not poolside.