



Fact Sheet: Shigellosis

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information, contact your health care provider or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov.

What is shigellosis?

Shigellosis is a disease caused by bacteria called *Shigella* that can infect the intestines and colon of humans and cause diarrhea. It is one of the easiest germs to transmit to others because it only takes a few organisms to make a person sick.

How does shigellosis spread?

Shigellosis is easily spread to others when an infected person does not thoroughly wash their hands including under their fingernails after using the bathroom or after changing the diaper of a child who has the illness and then touching their mouths.

Both asymptomatic and symptomatic people can transmit the bacteria directly and indirectly to others by contaminated food, water or objects (i.e., toilets, tables, pens, or toys). Other exposures include:

- Touching surfaces such as bathroom fixtures, diaper pails, changing tables contaminated with *Shigella* bacteria from someone with an infection
- Food can also become contaminated from flies, sewage or from the uncleaned hands of an infected food handler. Swallowing recreational water contaminated with *Shigella* from an infected person's feces that may be present inside lakes, pools, or water park play fountains can transmit the bacteria to others
- Exposure to stool during sexual contact with an *Shigella* infected person or recently recovered from *Shigella* infection

What are the symptoms of shigellosis?

Symptoms usually start 1 to 3 days after infection with the bacteria and can last 5 to 7 days. Some people may have symptoms that last for several weeks and others may not feel sick at all. The symptoms can include:

- Stomach pain (cramping)
- Fever
- Diarrhea that may contain blood and/ or mucus
- Dehydration
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Seizures (in young children)

How is shigellosis diagnosed and treated?

Some people may recover without any specific treatment within 5 to 7 days.

- Patients should drink plenty of fluids (water and juice) to prevent dehydration.

In more severe cases, doctors may prescribe an antibiotic. It is important that a person take all the medicine even if they begin to feel better. If anyone in the household have similar symptoms, they should contact their healthcare provider for testing.

- People with bloody stool should not use anti-diarrheal medicines, such as Imodium or Lomotil. These medicines may make symptoms worse

How can shigellosis be prevented?

- Use good hygiene and wash hands after using the bathroom, changing a diaper, and before eating
- An infected person should not prepare food, go swimming or have sex while having diarrhea. Sexual activity can resume at least two weeks after a person no longer has diarrhea
- Clean the bathroom, including the toilet, flushing handle, water faucets and doorknobs with 1 tablespoon of bleach

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in 1 gallon of water (*make a fresh solution every day*).

- Put disposable diapers in a plastic bag and throw them away in a tightly closed garbage can.
- Avoid swallowing water from ponds, lakes, or untreated pools.
- Keep sick children away from other children until they are well. Children should not go back to school until they are free of symptoms and have taken all prescribed medication.
- Wash dirty sheets, clothes, and cloth diapers in hot soapy water and dry in a dryer.
- Wash toys that can be put into children's mouths after each child's use with 1 tablespoon of bleach in 1 gallon of water (*make a fresh solution every day*).
- Infected food service workers, healthcare workers, and childcare workers must immediately report their illness to their supervisor. He/she cannot return to work until they are no longer ill and have a return-to-work letter from their medical provider.
- Carefully wash hands with soap and water before any sexual activity