

SHIGELLA

PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

What is Shigella?

Shigellosis is an infectious disease caused by a group of bacteria called Shigella. The Shigella species primarily infects the large intestine and may cause severe symptoms or no symptoms at all.

How is it spread?

The primary mode of transmission is fecal-oral. The most common modes of transmission include person-to-person contact, contact with a contaminated inanimate object, ingestion of contaminated food or water, and sexual contact. If you have been exposed to the bacteria, you may develop symptoms from 1 to 7 days after exposure, but typically 2 to 4 days after exposure.

How is it treated?

Since the shigella bacteria can be identified in the stool through laboratory tests, your doctor may request that you submit a stool sample for testing. Persons with mild shigella infections usually recover without antibiotic treatment, however, antibiotics may be used to treat severe shigella infections. In order to prevent dehydration, it is important to continue drinking liquids such as water, clear juices, broth, jello, or tea.

If you are a food-handler, or if you work or attend a day care center, you should not work, or attend, until all symptoms have subsided. You may be required to submit a stool sample to make sure the bacteria is gone (it can last up to 4 weeks).

How can we prevent Shigella?

- Frequent good hand washing with soap and water is important for all age groups.
- Always wash your hands after going to the toilet, after changing diapers and before preparing food.
- Persons with a diarrhea illness should not prepare food for others.
- When traveling to the developing world, drink only treated or boiled water, eat only hot cooked foods or fruit you wash and peel yourself.

SYMPTOMS OF SHIGELLA

- Watery or loose stools
- Diarrhea (may contain blood and mucus)
- Fever
- Nausea
- Abdominal cramps

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