

# Shigella

## What is *Shigella*?

*Shigella* is a bacterium that causes an illness called **shigellosis**. The illness affects the stomach and intestines.

## How do I get shigellosis?

People must ingest (swallow or eat) the *Shigella* bacteria to become infected. *Shigella* bacteria is usually spread through the following:

- People who are infected with *Shigella* will have the bacteria in their feces (stools). If people do not properly wash their hands after using the restroom or changing diapers, and then handle food others will eat or objects people will put in their mouths (e.g., toys), they can spread the bacteria to other people.
- Some people may carry and spread the *Shigella* bacteria without ever having symptoms. An infected person can spread the bacteria for as long as four weeks.
- *Shigella* is **NOT** spread from one person to another by coughing or sneezing, sharing drinks, hugging or kissing.

## What are the symptoms of shigellosis?

Symptoms usually begin within 12-96 hours (usually 1-3 days) after ingesting the bacteria. Symptoms include:

- Diarrhea (sometimes bloody)
- Fever
- Stomach pain and cramping
- Nausea - sometimes
- Dehydration (due to diarrhea and vomiting)

## What is the treatment for shigellosis?

Most symptoms will go away on their own in a few days (5-7 days). If symptoms persist or are severe, see your health care provider. Treatment with antibiotics can reduce the amount of time that a person is able to spread the disease.



### Did you know?

Only humans and primates are known to carry *Shigella* bacteria. In the United States, *Shigella* is mainly spread person-to-person, especially among young kids in child care settings.

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## How do I prevent shigellosis?

- Wash your hands before preparing food or handling dishes or baby toys.
- Always wash your hands after using the restroom. You can have and spread the bacteria even if you do not have any symptoms
- Always wash your hands and the child's hands after diapering or helping with toilet training.
- Avoid swallowing water from pools, lakes or untreated water sources .

### Protect Others



Persons infected with *Shigella* could have the bacteria in their feces (stool) even if they are not having symptoms. If other people ingest this bacteria, they can become sick as well. If you think you have *Shigella*:

- Do not prepare food for others.
- If your job involves handling food, working with children or if you work in healthcare, **do not** go to work and see your health care provider.
- Children who might have *Shigella* **must not** go to child care settings (especially if they have diarrhea) and should see a health care provider.

## Why does the health department investigate *Shigella*?



- It is the responsibility of the local health department to investigate *Shigella* in the community. The health department keeps track of how many people are getting the disease and works to limit the number of people exposed.
- The health department investigates outbreaks of *Shigella* in an attempt to identify the source of illness and to prevent further spread of the disease.
- The health department works with people whose jobs involve handling food, working in child care, or working in health care to determine when it is safe for them to resume their normal job duties. The health department also works to determine when it is safe for children who have *Shigella* to return to child care.



**Hand washing after using the bathroom or changing a diaper is the most effective way to prevent spreading *Shigella* to others.**