

What is Shigellosis?

Shigellosis is an infection of the gut caused by the bacterium, *Shigella*. Most people become ill in the summer and early fall.

What are the symptoms of an infection with *Shigella* bacteria?

A person(s) infected with *Shigella* may have mild to severe diarrhea, fever, and painful bloody, mucous stools. Some infected person(s) may not have any symptoms.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Diarrhea may appear 12 hours to 4 days after infection, but usually within 1 - 3 days.

How is *Shigella* spread?

Shigella is found in the feces (stool) of an infected person(s). It is very easily spread by close contact with an infected person or eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water. Once one person in the family is ill it is common for other family members to become ill.

Who gets Shigellosis?

Anyone can get Shigellosis. Young children, especially those in child care centers, or living in crowded conditions, are infected more often.

How long is a person infectious?

During the time a person is ill and up to four weeks after the illness.

What is the treatment?

Most people will recover without treatment. People with severe diarrhea, especially small children and elderly people, should see a doctor.

Do infected people need to be excluded from school, work, or child care?

Since *Shigella* is found in the feces (stool), and is easily spread, people with diarrhea should not go to child care, school, or work. For people who handle food, child care workers or attendees, or healthcare workers, treatment should be considered. These groups should have two negative stool cultures, taken at least 24 hours apart and not < 48 hours after antibiotics stopped, if given, before they return to work or child care.

How can you prevent the spread of these bacteria?

Thorough handwashing with soap and running warm water for no < 15 seconds (about the time it takes to sing "happy birthday" or "the ABC" song), that includes particular attention to the front and back of the hands and between the fingers, and particular attention to around and underneath the fingernails, must be practiced. Good handwashing must be done every time people use the toilet, change a diaper, or before they eat or prepare any food. Infants and children must also have their hands washed, as above, after diapers have been changed or after using the toilet and before eating. If children are helping to prepare foods, their hands must be washed beforehand.