

SHIGELLA FACT SHEET

What is *Shigella*?

Shigella is a group of bacteria that causes an illness known as shigellosis.

Who can get shigellosis?

Anyone. However, travelers to developing countries, young children, and men who have sex with men are at the highest risk for infection.

What are the symptoms of shigellosis?

Symptoms of shigellosis can include diarrhea (may be bloody), abdominal pain, fever, and a painful sensation of needing to pass stools even when bowels are empty.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually begin within 1–2 days after becoming infected with the bacteria.

How does shigellosis spread?

Shigella is present in the stools of infected persons. The bacteria can remain in the stool for up to two weeks after the diarrhea has gone away. *Shigella* may be spread when a person swallows or puts something in their mouth that was in contact with the stool of an infected person. This can happen through the following ways:

- Touching contaminated objects or surfaces, such as toys, bathroom fixtures, changing tables, diapers
- Eating contaminated food
- Swallowing or drinking contaminated water, such as lake or pool water while swimming
- Exposure to feces through sexual contact

How is shigellosis diagnosed?

Your health care provider can order a laboratory test to identify if *Shigella* are present in your stool and determine which treatment may be appropriate.

How is shigellosis treated?

Most people with shigellosis will recover within 5–7 days without any specific treatment other than adequate fluids

to prevent dehydration. For severe cases, your health care provider may prescribe antibiotics to reduce the duration of symptoms. If you require antibiotic treatment, your health care provider can perform a test to determine which antibiotics are likely to work since *Shigella* is often resistant to antibiotics.

How can a person protect themselves against shigellosis?

The following steps can help protect you against shigellosis:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, scrubbing your hands for at least 20 seconds, particularly before eating and after changing a diaper
- Avoid swallowing water from ponds, lakes or untreated swimming pools
- When traveling internationally, follow food and water precautions, for example:
 - Only drink bottled, boiled, or chemically-treated water
 - Only eat foods that are freshly cooked and served hot
- Avoid sexual activity with those who have diarrhea or who recently recovered from diarrhea

Should a person with shigellosis stay home from work or school/day care?

Children should be kept home while they have diarrhea. People who work in healthcare, food service, or child care facilities should not prepare or handle food for others while ill.

Where can I get more information?

Information about shigellosis and other related health topics can be found at www.cdc.gov. The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please visit www.doh.dc.gov or call (202) 442-9371.