

Shigellosis Fact Sheet

Shigellosis is an infection of the intestines caused by a bacterium called *Shigella*

It causes symptoms such as:

- Diarrhea (sometimes with blood or mucus)
- Stomach cramps
- Fever
- Nausea or vomiting

Symptoms may occur from 1 to 7 days after exposure but usually occur within 1 to 3 days. Symptoms last an average of 4 to 7 days. Some infected people, especially adults, may not show any symptoms.

Shigellosis is most common in young children

Anyone can get shigellosis, but those who may be at greater risk include children in child care centers and their parents, foreign travelers to certain countries, institutionalized people, and men who have sex with men.

People get shigellosis from other people

Shigella is found in the feces (stool) of infected persons. *Shigella* may be spread to others by the stool of infected persons while they are sick and possibly for up to 4 weeks after they feel better. Infected people who don't show any symptoms of shigellosis may also spread *Shigella* through their stool for several weeks. The germ is spread to other people either by direct contact with an infected person's stool or by eating or drinking contaminated food or water. Primates, which are the only animals that develop shigellosis, are rarely a source of human infection.

Handwashing is the most important way to prevent infection. Wash hands with soap and water:

- After using the toilet
- After changing diapers
- After touching any stool-soiled material
- Before handling food or drink
- Before eating

Help young children to wash their hands.

See your doctor if you have diarrhea or possible shigellosis

- Most people recover on their own. Some may require fluids or antibiotics.
- Antidiarrheal agents such as Imodium or Lomotil are likely to make the illness worse and should be avoided.
- Foodhandlers, health care and child care workers, children in child care, or persons in the family of such people who have shigellosis should contact their local health department to get specific recommendations.