

# SHIGELLA FACT SHEET

## ■ WHAT IS SHIGELLOSIS?

Shigellosis is a diarrheal illness caused by the bacteria *Shigella*. Shigellosis can be quite severe, especially in young children, the elderly, and those with weakened immune systems.

## ■ WHO CAN GET SHIGELLA?

Anyone can get *Shigella*, but those who are at the highest risk include:

- People with limited access to washing facilities who live in crowded areas, such as persons experiencing homelessness
- Men who have sex with men
- Young children in child care settings
- Travelers to developing countries

## ■ HOW IS SHIGELLA SPREAD?

Infected persons carry *Shigella* in their feces (poop) while they are sick and can spread the disease. Ingesting even a small amount of contaminated feces can cause someone to become ill. Ways that people become infected with *Shigella* include:

- Unknown exposure to infected feces or objects that have infected feces on them (i.e. using contaminated utensils or sharing personal items with an infected person).
- Consumption of food or liquids contaminated by an infected person; food items that have been sources of outbreaks have included vegetables that are usually eaten raw, raw oysters, and commercially prepared food products.
- Swallowing untreated recreational water contaminated with *Shigella*; this includes lakes, pools, and water park play fountains.
- Exposure to the feces of an infected person during sexual contact.

## ■ WHAT ARE SYMPTOMS OF SHIGELLOSIS?

Symptoms usually begin 1-2 days after exposure and can include:

- Diarrhea (can be bloody)
- Fever
- Stomach pain

## ■ HOW IS SHIGELLA TREATED?

People with mild shigellosis usually recover without treatment. It is important to drink enough fluids to prevent dehydration. For more severe infections, a health care provider can prescribe an appropriate antibiotic to treat shigellosis. Antibiotic-resistant *Shigella* has become increasingly common; therefore, health care providers should make treatment decisions based on culture results.

## ■ HOW CAN YOU PREVENT SHIGELLOSIS?

- Wash hands with soap and water carefully and frequently, especially after using the bathroom or after changing diapers.
- Always wash hands before preparing foods or beverages and eating.
- Keep children with diarrhea out of child care settings.
- Do not prepare foods for others if you have diarrhea.
- Do not take part in recreational water activities (such as swimming) if you have diarrhea.
- Carefully wash vegetables that will be eaten raw.
- When traveling in developing countries, drink only treated or boiled water and eat only cooked hot foods or fruits you peel yourself.
- Avoid fecal exposure during sex.

## ■ WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT SHIGELLOSIS?

Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services:  
[Longbeach.gov/shigella](http://longbeach.gov/shigella)

California Department of Public Health:  
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Shigellosis.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/shigella/>

If you have any additional questions contact the Epidemiology Program at (562) 570-4302.

