

About...Shigellosis

What is shigellosis?

Shigellosis (shig-uh-LOH-sis) is a contagious diarrheal illness caused by *Shigella* bacteria. There are four types of *Shigella* bacteria: sonnei, flexneri, boydii, and dysenteriae. *Shigella* bacteria are found mainly in humans, and the infection is very easily passed from one person to another. It is very serious in babies, the elderly, and people with weakened immune systems. On average, 200 cases of shigellosis are reported in Indiana each year.

How is shigellosis spread?

Shigella is passed in the stool, and people become infected by having contact with stool from an infected person (fecal-oral route). Infection may be transmitted in several ways:

- Consuming food or beverages prepared by an infected person.
- Hand-to-mouth exposure to the stool or vomit of an infected person, such as:
 - Handling or cleaning up stool or vomit.
 - Touching a contaminated surface or object.
 - Having close contact with an ill household member.
 - Having sexual contact that involves contact with stool.

High-risk settings include those involving large groups of people, food, or poor hand hygiene, e.g., daycare centers, schools, hospitals, and long-term care facilities. Persons who work in certain occupations, such as food handlers, daycare providers, and health care providers, have a greater risk of transmitting infection to others. *Shigella* bacteria are not naturally found in foods of animal origin.

What are the symptoms of shigellosis?

- Sudden stomach pain
- Stomach cramps
- Diarrhea
- Blood, pus, and mucus in stool
- Fever
- Vomiting

Symptoms usually begin 24-72 hours (range of 12 hours to 5 days) after exposure and last about 4-7 days. Some people may have no symptoms but can still spread the infection to others.

How do I know if I have shigellosis?

A person having diarrhea lasting more than 24 hours or having bloody stool should consult a health care provider. The health care provider may collect a stool sample to test for *Shigella*.

How is shigellosis treated?

Antibiotics are usually used to treat shigellosis. However, some strains of *Shigella* bacteria are resistant to certain antibiotics. Your health care provider will determine which antibiotic is right for you. It is important that the entire course of medication is finished and not share your medication with others.

Is shigellosis a reportable disease?

Yes. Health care providers and laboratories must immediately report cases of shigellosis to the local health department (LHD) or the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH). The LHD will contact all

cases diagnosed with *Shigella*, so a possible exposure can be determined to help prevent others from becoming ill.

How can shigellosis be prevented?

In general, shigellosis can be prevented by strictly adhering to the following guidelines:

- Practice good hygiene:
 - Thoroughly wash hands with soap and water after using the restroom; after assisting someone with diarrhea and/or vomiting; after swimming; and before, during, and after food preparation (please refer to [Quick Facts about Hand Washing](#)).
 - Clean food preparation work surfaces, equipment, and utensils with soap and water before, during, and after food preparation.
- Eat safe foods and drink safe water (Remember: Contaminated foods may look and smell normal):
 - Wash all produce before eating raw or cooking.
 - Use treated water for washing, cooking, and drinking.
- Protect others:
 - Persons with diarrhea and/or vomiting should not prepare food or provide health care for others and should limit direct contact with others as much as possible.
 - Persons with diarrhea and/or vomiting should not attend a daycare facility or school.
 - Persons with diarrhea and/or vomiting shall be excluded from employment involving food handling (Indiana Retail Food Establishment Sanitation Requirements, 410 IAC 7-24-122).

Where can I learn more about shigellosis?

To search Indiana data and statistics:

www.in.gov/isdh/dataandstats/disease/diseases_index.htm

To search the Indiana Food Protection Program:

<http://www.in.gov/isdh/regsvcs/foodprot/index.htm>

To search disease information:

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/shigellosis_g.htm

<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~mow/chap19.html>

To search for national data, statistics, and outbreaks:

www.cdc.gov/mmwr/

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