



# Indiana State Department of Health

## Epidemiology Resource Center

### Quick Facts

#### About...Shigellosis

##### What is shigellosis?

Shigellosis (shig-uh-LOH-sis) is a contagious diarrheal illness caused by *Shigella* bacteria. *Shigella* bacteria are found mainly in humans and the infection is very easily passed from person to person.

##### 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 is shigellosis spread?

*Shigella* is passed in the stool and people become infected by having contact with stool from an infected person.

Infection may be transmitted in several ways:

- Consuming food or drinks prepared by an infected person.
- 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.

## **Who is at risk for getting shigellosis?**

Anyone can become ill, but young children, senior adults, pregnant women, and immune suppressed individuals (such as patients on cancer drugs and with organ transplants) are at high risk for illness.

## **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.

## **How is shigellosis treated?**

Most people recover within 2 to 3 days without treatment, but severe infections may require medicine. Since diarrhea can cause dehydration, an ill person should drink plenty of fluids. Some strains of *Shigella* bacteria are resistant to certain medicine and your health care provider will determine what is right for you. It is important that the entire course of medication is finished and to not share your medication with others.

## **How is shigellosis prevented?**

In general, shigellosis can be prevented by following these steps:

- 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.
- Clean food preparation work surfaces, equipment, and utensils with soap and water before, during, and after food preparation.
- Wash all produce before eating raw or cooking.
- Persons with diarrhea and/or vomiting 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.

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information, please refer to: <http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/shigellosis/>

Food and Drug Administration, Food Facts for Consumers:  
<http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm077286.htm>

This page was last reviewed January 31, 2014.