



**What is shigellosis?**

Shigellosis is an infection of the intestines caused by bacteria called *Shigella*. It is found in the feces (stool) of infected humans.

**What are symptoms of shigellosis?**

Symptoms may be mild to severe and include diarrhea (may be watery or bloody), fever, stomach cramps, nausea, or vomiting. Illness often lasts about 3-10 days. Severe cases may cause dehydration (fluid loss) or convulsions. Infections are often more severe in young children and the elderly. Asymptomatic infections can also occur.

**How soon do symptoms appear?**

Symptoms usually appear 1-4 days after exposure to the bacteria but may rarely be as short as 12 hours or as long as 7 days.

**How is shigellosis spread?**

*Shigella* is spread by infected persons not washing their hands well after using the bathroom or handling ready-to-eat food (person to person). It is also spread by eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water.

**How long is a person infectious (contagious)?**

A person ill with shigellosis can spread disease if the bacteria are passed in their stool, usually 1-4 weeks after symptoms began. Some persons carry the bacteria for several months. Appropriate antibiotic treatment often shortens the length of time an ill person will spread the disease.

**People with shigellosis who are food handlers, health care workers, child care workers, or children attending a child care should be excluded from their work or childcare until released by Snohomish Health District. In general, such workers and children with shigellosis require two negative stool specimens before returning to work or child care. The stool specimen should be collected 24 hours apart and not sooner than 48 hours after the last dose of antibiotics if antibiotics were given.**

**How is shigellosis diagnosed and treated?**

The illness is diagnosed by stool culture. Most patients with *Shigella* are treated with fluid and electrolyte replacement. Antibiotics can shorten the length of time and severity of the illness, and they can shorten the period of time a person is contagious. Antidiarrheals are not recommended, as they may prolong the illness.

**How can shigellosis be prevented?**

1. Wash hands for 20 seconds with soap and warm water after using the bathroom or changing diapers. Make sure children also wash their hands well and clean under fingernails.
2. Disinfect any surface that is soiled by a child in diapers.
3. Wash hands well before and after preparing food.
4. Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly before eating.

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5. When traveling, drink only treated or boiled water, eat only cooked, hot food, or fruit you can peel yourself.
6. A person ill with *Shigella* should not use public recreational water venues (i.e., public swimming pools, hot tubs, lakes, water fountain parks, etc.) until 2 weeks after symptoms are gone.
7. Keep infected children away from other children and the elderly.

Shigellosis is a Washington State reportable disease and must be reported to your local health department. In Snohomish County, contact Communicable Disease Surveillance and Response at 425.339.3503, Monday-Friday, 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM.

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