

## SHIGELLOSIS

### **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.

### **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 as long as the bacteria are passed in their stool, usually 1-4 weeks after symptoms began. Some persons carry the bacteria several months. Appropriate antibiotic treatment shortens the length of infectiousness.

**Infected 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.**

### **How is shigellosis diagnosed and treated?**

The illness is diagnosed by stool culture. Antibiotics can shorten the length of time and severity of the illness, and they can shorten the period of time a person is contagious.

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### **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, including attention to fingernails.
2. Disinfect any surface that is soiled by a child in diapers. A mild bleach solution (1 tablespoon of bleach to a quart of cool water) is the best choice.
3. Wash hands well before and after preparing food.
4. Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly before eating.
5. When traveling, eat only cooked, hot foods or fruit you can peel yourself.
6. Drink only treated or boiled water.
7. 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.
8. 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 425.339.5278, Monday-Friday, 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM.

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