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Public Health Advisory: Increase in Shigella Activity

Muskegon, MI – Public Health – Muskegon County is currently investigating an increase in gastrointestinal complaints in Muskegon County. Laboratory testing has confirmed that some of the illnesses have been caused by a common strain of shigella bacteria. Monitoring and investigating disease activity are just two of the many ways that the public health department is always working for a safer and healthier Muskegon County.

Shigella illness can produce diarrhea, fever, stomach cramps and nausea/vomiting. On average, symptoms last 4 to 7 days, but can last several weeks. Anyone can get shigella, however the elderly, children and individuals who are immunocompromised are at higher risk. Because bacteria cause the illness, it can be treated with antibiotics.

Shigella spreads from person-to-person when hands, objects or food become contaminated with very small amounts of stool or feces from those who are infected, and the bacteria are then taken in by mouth. **Careful hand washing** following diaper changing, and following toilet use **is very important** to prevent spread.

Shigella infection can be prevented with the following prevention techniques.

- Wash your hands with soap carefully and frequently, especially after going to the bathroom, changing diapers, and before preparing foods or beverages.
- Dispose of soiled diapers properly in a closed lid garbage can.
- Disinfect diaper-changing areas after using them.
- Keep children with diarrhea out of child care settings.
- Supervise hand washing of toddlers and small children after they use the toilet.
- Stay home from school, work, community gatherings, etc. if you have diarrhea.
- Do not prepare food for others while ill with diarrhea.

Identifying the illness, protecting the public and limiting the spread of this illness are priorities for the public health department. Public health staff are interviewing and educating affected families, day cares, schools and area businesses.

To learn more about shigella, visit the public health department's web site at www.muskegonhealth.net.