



Public Health – Muskegon County

Shigellosis Fact Sheet

What is shigellosis?

Shigellosis is an intestinal infection caused by bacteria called “shigella” which can produce severe diarrhea, stomach cramps and fever. Some people who are infected may have no symptoms at all, but may still pass the infection on to others.

How is shigella spread?

Shigella can be spread in the following ways:

- By bacteria which are transferred from infected or soiled fingers of one person to the mouth of another person:
 - By improper hand washing after changing a diaper of an infected infant
 - By improper hand washing of an infected person after a bowel movement
- By eating contaminated foods:
 - Raw or uncooked meats
 - Unwashed vegetables contaminated in the field with sewage
- By drinking or swimming in contaminated water
- By flies that carry the infection from feces to food

What are possible symptoms?

The symptoms will usually occur between 1 – 3 days after exposure.

General symptoms may include:

- Diarrhea (may contain blood or mucus)
- Fever
- Chills
- Stomach cramps
- Nausea /vomiting

A small number of people infected with shigellosis will have joint pains, eye irritation, and painful urination, which is called Reiter’s syndrome. It can last for months to years, and may lead to chronic arthritis.

How is shigellosis diagnosed?

Shigellosis is usually diagnosed through a stool test. Follow up stool tests are often done to confirm that a patient is no longer infected.

What is the treatment for shigella?

Shigellosis is usually treated with antibiotics, although people with milder cases may recover without medication. Anti-diarrheal medicines such as *Imodium* or *Lomotil* are likely to make the illness worse and should be avoided.

As with all cases of vomiting or diarrhea it is important to stay hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids.

How can shigellosis be prevented?

- Practice good hygiene
- Wash your hands with soap frequently, especially after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and before preparing food and drinks
- Dispose of dirty diapers properly and disinfect diaper changing areas with bleach, lysol, or bacterial wipes
- Supervise hand washing of children
- Avoid drinking pool water
- If you have the illness do not prepare food for others

People who are infected should not be employed to handle food or to provide childcare until 2 stool samples have tested negative for Shigella.

For more information on shigellosis:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/food/>

CDC Public Information

English	1-888-246-2675
Espanol	1-888-246-2857
TTY	1-888-874-2646