

Shigellosis (Shigella)



What is Shigella?



- Shigella is a bacteria that causes an infection called Shigellosis.
- Shigellosis is a particularly common illness and is more common in summer than winter.
- Every year, about 18,000 laboratory-confirmed cases of Shigellosis are reported in the United States.
- Shigella leaves the body through human feces. The disease spreads when bacteria from the stool of the sick person go to the mouth of another person.



What to do if you have symptoms:



Contact your health provider if you have concerns or questions about your health, especially if you have bloody diarrhea or severe stomach cramping. They may ask you to submit a stool (poop) sample to diagnose Shigella.

Tell your healthcare provider if you have other medical conditions or a weakened immune system (such as HIV infection or from chemotherapy treatment) because you may be more likely to become severely ill.

Who can get Shigellosis?



Children, especially toddlers 2-3 years old, are most likely to get Shigellosis, but anyone can get it.

People can get Shigella from:

- Direct contact with stool, soiled fingers of a person with Shigella, or touching objects that have been infected.
- Drinking contaminated water.
- Eating food contaminated by someone who has Shigellosis.
- Contaminated food if they are harvested from a field with sewage in it.
- Being exposed to human poop through sexual contact.

How to decrease your chance of getting Shigellosis:

The best way to decrease your chance is to practice good hygiene.

Wash your hands often:

- after using the bathroom
- before handling or eating food
- after changing diapers. Also wash your children's hands
- and all surfaces after changing diapers



-Avoid swallowing water from lakes, streams, pools and kiddie pools.

-Avoid sexual contact with those who have diarrhea or who recently recovered from diarrhea.

Symptoms of Shigellosis:

Some people will not have symptoms. If they do, symptoms usually start 1-2 days after exposure, but may range from 12-96 hours

Symptoms include:

- Diarrhea that can be bloody
- Stomach cramps or pain
- Fever
- Feeling the need to pass stool (poop) even when the bowels are empty



Treatment:



There is no vaccine or cure for Shigella. People with a Shigella infection should drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. Antibiotics can shorten the time you have fever and diarrhea by about 2 days. If your healthcare provider prescribes antibiotics for a Shigella infection, take them exactly as instructed. Make sure you take all the pills even if you feel better.

It is not recommended that people with bloody diarrhea use anti-diarrheal medication, such as loperamide (Imodium) or diphenoxylate with atropine (Lomotil). These medications may make symptoms worse.