

SHIGELLOSIS (*Shigella*)

What is it?

Shigella is a bacterium that causes a diarrheal illness called shigellosis.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of shigellosis include diarrhea (often bloody), abdominal pain, stomach cramps, and fever. Sometimes people infected with *Shigella* have no symptoms at all, but can still pass the bacteria to others.

Symptoms usually begin 1 to 3 days after being exposed to *Shigella*.

How long does it last?

Symptoms usually last about 5 to 7 days. Treatment for shigellosis may be available from your health care provider. People with mild symptoms usually recover on their own without treatment.

How is it spread?

Shigella is found in the stool (feces) of infected people, in food or water contaminated by an infected person, and on surfaces that have been touched by infected people. Shigellosis often occurs in toddlers who are not fully toilet-trained. Family members and playmates of children infected with *Shigella* are at high risk of becoming infected. *Shigella* can spread easily in environments such as day care facilities.

People become infected with *Shigella* by:

- Eating food or drinking liquids contaminated by an infected person.
- Touching contaminated surfaces or objects and then touching their mouth or putting a contaminated object into their mouth.
- Swallowing recreational water contaminated with *Shigella* (recreational water includes lakes, streams, rivers, springs, ponds, swimming pools, hot tubs, Jacuzzis, and water park fountains).
- Not washing hands after using the bathroom or changing diapers and then eating foods.

What should I do if I have symptoms?

- Contact your health care provider.
- Wash your hands often.

How can I prevent *Shigella* infections?

- Wash your hands with warm, soapy water for 20 seconds
 - ✓ After using the bathroom
 - ✓ After changing diapers
 - ✓ Before eating
- Wash your hands more often when someone in your household is sick.
- Supervise young children to be sure they are properly washing their hands.
- Do not send your child to daycare or preschool if he or she has diarrhea.
- Avoid preparing food for others while you have symptoms.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces with household bleach immediately after vomiting or diarrheal accidents.

Healthy Swimming Tips:

- Do not swallow water or get water in your mouth while swimming.
- Take a shower before swimming.
- Do not swim when you have diarrhea.
- When swimming, take your kids on frequent bathroom breaks – waiting to hear “I have to go” may mean that it’s already too late.
- Change diapers in changing rooms, not poolside or on the beach. Wash hands after changing diapers.

To report a suspected foodborne illness, call the Minnesota Department of Health Foodborne Illness Hotline at 1-877-FOOD-ILL (or 651-201-5655 from the Twin Cities).

