

# IDRS Infectious Disease Reporting System

Disease Reporting 24 Hours a Day

Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health

## SHIGELLOSIS

The *Shigella* germ is actually a family of bacteria that can cause diarrhea in humans. They are microscopic creatures that pass from person to person.

### Symptoms

Symptoms usually begin 1 to 4 days after swallowing the bacteria and include:

- Diarrhea (may be watery or bloody)
- Fever
- Stomach cramps
- Nausea or vomiting
- Some people may have no symptoms, but can still spread the bacteria.
- Symptoms usually last 5-7 days. However, it may take a few months to feel completely normal.
- A few people may develop complications such as dehydration, seizures, or arthritis.

### How Is It Spread?

- The *Shigella* bacteria pass from one person to the next through the stool (poop) of infected people. It most often spreads when someone does not wash his/her hands well after using the restroom. Toddlers in toilet-training often spread the infection because they haven't yet learned how to stay clean.
- People can spread *Shigella* while they are sick and for up to a week or two afterwards.
- *Shigella* infections may be acquired from eating contaminated food. Contaminated food usually looks and smells normal. Food may become contaminated by infected food handlers who forget to wash their hands with soap after using the bathroom.
- Food or water sources may also be contaminated if exposed to *Shigella*-carrying sewage or flies.

### Diagnosis & Treatment

- A laboratory can test for *Shigella* in a stool sample.
- People with mild infections usually recover quickly without antibiotic treatment. However, appropriate antibiotic treatment kills *Shigella* bacteria, and may shorten the illness by a few days.
- Don't use medicines to prevent diarrhea such as Imodium or Lomotil. They can make the illness worse.

### Prevention

- Wash hands well with soap and water EVERY time you use the bathroom or change a child's diaper. Parents and teachers should watch young children wash their hands to make sure they wash thoroughly.
- People with shigellosis should not prepare food or drinks for others.
- Wash all fruits and vegetables before eating.
- If you travel to developing countries, drink only treated, boiled, or bottled water, and eat only cooked hot foods or fruits you peel yourself.

### Additional Information

Food service workers, child care workers, children attending childcare, and patient care providers should stay away from their regular activities until they have completed at least 5 days of an appropriate antibiotic treatment and 2 stool samples show that they do not have *Shigella*.

**All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.**



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