

# Shigella

### What is Shigella?

- Shigella is a germ that causes an infection of the intestines.

### What are the symptoms of Shigella infection?

- Most people infected with Shigella develop diarrhea, stomach cramps, fever and nausea or vomiting.
- The diarrhea may be bloody.
- Symptoms may occur from one to seven days after exposure and last four to seven days.

### How is Shigella spread?

- Shigella is found in the stool (bowel movement) of infected people and spreads when hands, food, water or objects (such as toys) become contaminated with the stool of the infected person. This can happen when infected people do not wash their hands thoroughly after using the bathroom, or when others have been in close contact with or cared for infected people.
- Shigella is easily spread among toddlers who are not fully toilet-trained. Family members and playmates of such children are at high risk of becoming infected.
- People with Shigella infection who go swimming when they have diarrhea can contaminate recreational water such as lakes or rivers, as well as swimming pools that are not properly maintained. Other people can become infected from swallowing the contaminated water.

### What should I do if I think I have Shigella infection?

- Consult your doctor or health care provider.
- Do not send your children to child care or school if they have diarrhea.
- Do not go to work if you have diarrhea, especially if you are a health care worker, food handler or a child care worker.
- Do not go swimming if you have diarrhea.
- Do not prepare food for others while you have diarrhea and for at least 48 hours after your diarrhea resolves.
- Wash your hands thoroughly after using the bathroom.

### How is Shigella infection diagnosed?

- Many different illnesses can cause diarrhea or abdominal cramps. Laboratory testing of stool is necessary to diagnose Shigella infection.

### How is Shigella infection treated?

- Most people with mild Shigella infection recover on their own. People with more severe illness may require extra fluids or antibiotic treatment.
- Antidiarrheal medications such as Imodium or Lomotil can make the illness worse and should be avoided.
- Food handlers, child care workers, health care workers and children in child care who are diagnosed with Shigella infection need to have follow-up stool testing to be sure they are not still carrying Shigella before going back into child care or work.

### How do you prevent Shigella infection?

- Handwashing is the most important way to prevent infection. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water:
  - \* after using the bathroom
  - \* after touching any stool-soiled material
  - \* after changing diapers
  - \* before handling food or drink, and before eating

**More information about Shigella:** <http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/shigellosis/>

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