

Facts & DETAILS

Shigellosis

What is shigellosis

Shigellosis is a diarrheal infection caused by a group of bacteria called *Shigella*.

How common is shigellosis?

Every year, there are about 500,000 cases of shigellosis in the United States.

How do people become infected?

Shigellosis is spread from person to person. *Shigella* bacteria spread easily; a small number of bacteria can make someone ill.

Ways to become infected include:

- Swallowing contaminated recreational water (water from swimming pools, splash pads, hot tubs, fountains, lakes, rivers, springs, ponds, or streams).
- Accidentally swallowing *Shigella* picked up from surfaces contaminated with infected feces, such as bathroom fixtures, changing tables, diaper pails, or toys.
- Accidentally putting something into your mouth or swallowing something that has come into contact with infected feces (poop).
- Eating contaminated foods.
- Taking care of someone who has shigellosis, including cleaning up after the person uses the toilet or changing diapers.
- Exposure through sexual contact.

What are the signs and symptoms of shigellosis?

Shigellosis symptoms include diarrhea (sometimes bloody), fever, stomach pain, and feeling the need to pass stool (poop) even when the bowels are empty.

How long can you spread shigellosis?

After exposure, symptoms usually appear in one to two days and last about seven days. People with shigellosis can spread *Shigella* for up to two weeks after diarrhea has ended.

Who is at risk for shigellosis?

Anyone can become infected with shigellosis, but young children, international travelers, and men who have sex with men are more likely to be infected. People with weakened immune systems are at risk for more serious disease.

How is shigellosis treated?

Most people with healthy immune systems will recover without treatment. Drinking plenty of fluids can also help prevent dehydration. Do not take antidiarrheal medicine. Severe cases of shigellosis can be treated with antibiotics, but *Shigella* bacteria can be resistant to antibiotics. Medical providers should test the bacteria to determine which antibiotics are likely to work, if treatment is needed.

How can you prevent shigellosis?

There is no vaccine for shigellosis. Prevent infection by the following methods:

- Wash your hands after using the toilet, changing diapers, and before preparing or eating food.
- Do not swallow untreated, unfiltered, or recreational water, including swimming pool water.
- Do not swim until two weeks after diarrhea stops.
- Someone diagnosed with shigellosis cannot return to work as a food employee, healthcare worker, or attend or work in a daycare until they have one negative stool test.
- Avoid sexual activity with those who have diarrhea or have recently recovered from diarrhea.



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