

# Shigella

## *What is Shigellosis?*

Shigellosis is an infection of the gut caused by bacteria called Shigella. It is a common disease in Oklahoma. The majority of people become ill in the summer and early fall.

## *Who is at risk for Shigella?*

Anyone can get Shigella. Younger children, especially those in day care centers, are more frequently infected.

## *What are symptoms of Shigella?*

- Mild to severe diarrhea which can be watery or bloody with mucous
- Fever
- Stomach cramps
- Vomiting
- Nausea

## *How soon do symptoms appear?*

Diarrhea may appear 1 to 7 days after the exposure but usually within 2 – 3 days. Those who are infected may have no symptoms at all but are still able to pass the Shigella bacteria to others.

## *How is Shigella spread?*

Shigella is found in the stool (feces) of an infected person. It can be spread by oral contact with stool-contaminated toys and other objects.

It is spread by close contact with an infected person, eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water. Swimming in water that is contaminated can also lead to infection.

Vegetables can become contaminated if they are harvested from a field with sewage.

## *How can Shigella be diagnosed?*

A laboratory test (stool culture) can identify the bacteria.

## *How long is a person able to spread Shigella?*

Most people have Shigella in their feces for 1 to 4 weeks.

### *What can be done once a person is diagnosed with Shigella?*

Shigella is found in feces therefore, people with diarrhea should not go to school or work.

People who handle food, work in childcare centers or are healthcare workers should be treated and have no Shigella in their stools before they return to work.

### *Is there treatment for Shigella?*

Treatment for Shigella usually consists of rest and drinking plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. Antibiotics may or may not be prescribed by a doctor depending on the severity of the illness. Antibiotic treatment can shorten the course of illness and decrease the length of time the bacteria is shed in the stool.

### *How can Shigella be prevented?*

To prevent the spreading of Shigella, always wash hands carefully with warm water and soap. People should be especially careful to wash their hands after diapering a child, going to the bathroom, and before eating or preparing food.

Teach children to wash their hands with soap and warm water every time after going to the bathroom.

Do not work with diarrhea or allow children to attend day care with diarrhea.

For more information, please call the Tulsa Health Department at 918 582 WELL (9355).

### *Sources*

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH)