



Salem/Cumberland County Health Department



SHIGELLOSIS

(PUBLIC HANDOUT)

What is shigellosis?

Shigellosis is a disease caused by a group of bacteria.

What are the symptoms of shigellosis?

- Diarrhea (often bloody)
- Fever
- Stomach cramps

Symptoms start 1-2 days after exposure to the bacteria.

Shigellosis usually resolves itself within 5-7 days.

How does shigellosis spread?

The bacteria that cause shigellosis pass from one infected person to the next. Most infections are the result of the bacteria passing from the stool or soiled fingers of an infected person to the mouth of another person. This happens when basic hygiene and hand washing habits are inadequate.

Infections can also spread through contaminated foods. Contaminated food may look and smell normal. Food may become contaminated by infected food handlers who forgot to wash their hands with soap after using the bathroom. Vegetables can become contaminated if they are harvested from a field with sewage in it. Flies can breed in infected feces



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and then contaminate food. Shigellosis infections can also spread from drinking or swimming in contaminated water. Water may become contaminated if sewage runs into it, or if someone with shigellosis swims in it.

How can shigellosis be treated?

Shigellosis can usually be treated with antibiotics.

Are there long term consequences to shigellosis?

People with diarrhea usually recover completely. About 3% of people with the infection will later develop pains in their joints, irritation of the eyes, and painful urination. This is called Reiter's syndrome. It can last for months to years, and can lead to chronic treatment which is difficult to treat. Reiter's syndrome is caused by a reaction to the infection that happens only to people who are genetically predisposed to it.

Tips for preventing the spread for shigellosis:

- Wash hands with soap carefully and frequently, especially after going to the bathroom, after changing diapers, and before preparing foods and beverages.
- Dispose of soiled diapers properly.



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- Disinfect diaper changing areas after using them.
- Keep children with diarrhea out of child care settings.
- Supervise hand washing of toddlers and small children after they use the bathroom.
- People with diarrhea should not prepare food for others.
- If you are traveling to the developing world, “boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it”.
- Avoid drinking pool water.