

Barry-Eaton District Health Department

Shigellosis

What is Shigellosis?

Shigellosis is an infectious disease caused by a group of bacteria called Shigella. Most who are infected with shigella develop diarrhea, fever, and stomach cramps. The diarrhea is often bloody.

How do people catch Shigella?

The shigella bacteria is passed from one infected person to the next. Most shigella infections are the result of the bacteria passing from stools or soiled fingers of one person to the mouth of another person. Family members and playmates of infected children are at high risk of becoming infected. Shigella infections may also be acquired from contaminated food, vegetables harvested from fields with sewage in it, flies that breed in the infected feces and then contaminate food or by drinking or swimming in contaminated water.

How can Shigella infections be treated?

Shigellosis can usually be treated with antibiotics. However, persons with mild infections will usually recover quickly without antibiotic treatment.

How long is someone with Shigellosis contagious?

A person may be infected for one or two days before they start to show symptoms. Shigellosis usually lasts about 5 to 7 days. In some persons, especially young children and the elderly, the diarrhea can be so severe that the patient needs to be hospitalized.

How can I prevent Shigellosis?

Some tips for preventing the spread of shigellosis:

- wash hands with soap carefully and frequently, especially after going to the bathroom, after changing diapers, and before preparing foods or beverages
- dispose of soiled diapers properly
- 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 toilet
- persons with diarrheal illnesses 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



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