

What is it?

Shigellosis is an infection caused by bacteria called *Shigella*. *Shigella* is a common cause of diarrhea.

Who gets it?

Anyone can get shigellosis, but it is most common among:

- Children less than 5 years old
- Children in childcare centers
- People who travel to places with poor sanitation and unsafe food and water
- People who are homeless
- Men who have sex with men

How does it spread?

A person can get shigellosis by accidentally getting tiny particles of feces (poop) in their mouth from a person or animal infected with shigellosis.

Shigellosis spreads easily, especially in places with:

- Poor sanitation
- Crowded living
- Contaminated food or water

A person can get sick by:

- Having direct contact with a person who is infected. Like, caring for a person who is sick or changing their diaper.
- Eating contaminated food or drinks
- Touching contaminated items, then putting their unwashed hands in their mouth
- Swallowing water that is not clean or safe, such as ponds or lakes that people swim in
- Having contact with feces during sex

What are the symptoms?

- Mild to severe diarrhea, sometimes with traces of blood or mucus
- Fever
- Nausea and vomiting
- Some people do not have any symptoms

Symptoms usually start 1–3 days after exposure to the bacteria and last about a week.

How is it diagnosed?

Lab tests can find *Shigella* in feces.

What is the treatment?

Most people do not need medicine to get better. People should drink liquids to stay hydrated. People with severe illness might need antibiotics. A healthcare provider will decide if a person needs antibiotics.

How can it be prevented?

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially:
 - After using the toilet or changing diapers
 - Before preparing and eating food
 - Before and after sexual activity
- Do not drink water that could be unsafe (e.g., water from ponds, lakes, or swimming pools)
- Wait at least 2 weeks after diarrhea ends to have sex
- If traveling internationally, follow safe eating and drinking habits

How long is a person contagious?

People can spread shigellosis for up to 2 weeks after their symptoms stop.

How long should a person stay home?

A person who has diarrhea should stay home until their diarrhea stops. Certain people should talk to the health department about when to return to work or school, including:

- Food handlers
- Healthcare workers
- Childcare workers
- Children who attend childcare

Some people may not be able to go to work or childcare until there are no more bacteria in their feces.

How can I get more information?

- For concerns about shigellosis, contact your healthcare provider.
- For questions about foodborne illness, visit Arlington County Public Health's Communicable Disease Program website (<https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Programs/Health/Public-Health/Communicable-Disease-Programs>).
- To report a foodborne illness, visit the My Meal Detective website (<https://redcap.vdh.virginia.gov/redcap/surveys/?s=PJACE4A4EY>).
- For more information on *Shigella*, visit the CDC's website (<https://www.cdc.gov/shigella>).



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