



Shigella

What is Shigella?

Shigellosis is an infectious disease caused by a group of bacteria called *Shigella*. The shigella species primarily infects the large intestine and may cause severe symptoms or no symptoms at all.

How is Shigella spread?

The primary mode of spread is fecal-oral, contact with the feces of an infected person. Common types of spread include:

- Person-to-person contact
- Contact with a contaminated object
- Ingestion of contaminated food or water
- Sexual contact

If you have been exposed to the bacteria, you may develop symptoms from 1 to 7 days after exposure, but typically 2 to 4 days after exposure.

How is Shigella treated?

- Since shigella bacteria can be identified in the stool through laboratory tests, your doctor may request that you submit a stool sample for testing.
- Persons with mild shigella infections usually recover without antibiotic treatment. However, antibiotics may be used to treat severe shigella infections. In order to prevent dehydration, it is important to continue drinking liquids such as water, clear juices, broth, Jello, or tea.
- If you are a food-handler, work in or attend a day care center, or are a health care worker, you should stay home until all symptoms have stopped and consult your physician before returning to work. You may be required to submit a stool sample to make sure the bacteria is no longer present (shigella can take up to 4 weeks).

How can Shigella be prevented?

- Frequent good hand washing with soap and water is important for all age groups.
- Always wash your hands after going to the toilet, after changing diapers and before preparing food.
- Persons with a diarrhea illness should not prepare food for others.
- When traveling to developing countries, drink only treated or boiled water, eat only hot thoroughly cooked foods, or fruit you wash and peel yourself.

Symptoms of Shigella:

- Watery or loose stools
- Diarrhea (may contain blood and mucus)
- Fever
- Nausea
- Abdominal cramps

Jackson County Health Department
1715 Lansing Ave.
Jackson, MI 49202
(517) 788-4420

www.mijackson.org



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English 1-888-246-2675

Espanol 1-888-246-2857

TTY 1-888-874-2646