

What kind of infection is it?

Shigella is a bacterial infection.

How do people get infected?

- *Shigella* and enteroinvasive *E. coli* are very similar types of bacteria that cause intestinal infections.
- *Shigella* is extremely contagious. Exposure to a very small amount can cause illness.
- *Shigella* only lives in the intestines of people. People become infected by coming into contact with the stool (poop) of someone with diarrhea due to *Shigella*. This can be through getting *Shigella* on your hands and touching your mouth or food after touching a contaminated surface (diapers, changing tables, bathroom fixtures).
- *Shigella* can remain in the intestine for several weeks after symptoms improve, allowing the infection to continue to be passed even if the person is no longer feeling ill.
- *Shigella* spreads very easily between people, especially younger children and in child care centers. Food can also become contaminated. People can become ill by swallowing lake water contaminated with *Shigella*.

What are the usual symptoms?

- Illness usually starts 1-3 days after exposure.
- Diarrhea, sometimes with blood, stomach pain or cramps, and fever.

How long does it last?

- Typically 2-7 days without treatment.

How is it treated?

- Prevent dehydration by drinking fluids. Most people will recover without treatment. Warning signs of dehydration include dry mouth, decreased urination, or dizziness.
- Anti-diarrheal drugs that slow the gut down such as loperamide (Immodium) or diphenoxylate with atropine (Lomotil) **should not be used** for children with *Shigella*.
- Certain antibiotics can shorten the duration of illness but are not always necessary. Antibiotics may decrease the likelihood of spreading *Shigella*.
- Some *Shigella* are resistant to the antibiotics usually used to treat this infection.

Are there possible complications?

- People infected with *Shigella* may develop pain in their joints, which is called post-infectious arthritis. They may also experience red eyes and painful urination.
- Very rarely, *Shigella* can cause a blood stream infection. This usually occurs in people with severely weakened immune systems.
- A rare complication of *Shigella* that only occurs with certain strains of *Shigella* is hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS). HUS is a serious illness with destruction of red blood cells, kidney injury and low platelets (a type of blood cell that controls bleeding).

Comments:

- People with *Shigella* can be infectious for up to 2 weeks after the illness starts.
- Wash hands carefully after using the bathroom, changing diapers and before and after cooking.
- Avoid swimming pools or water parks until fully recovered.
- People with diarrhea should not prepare food.
- Children with *Shigella* should not return to day care until cleared by the local health department.

Resources:

- [CDC Handout](#)