



# Shigella

## Facts about Shigella

Shigella is a bacteria that can cause illness, especially diarrhea. About 18,000 cases of shigella infection are reported in the U.S. every year and many more probably are not reported.

Some important things to know about shigella infection are:

- Symptoms include diarrhea, cramps, fever, and sometimes bloody diarrhea.
- Symptoms usually begin between 1 and 3 days after a person is exposed to the bacteria.
- Symptoms usually last between 5 and 7 days.
- Shigella is diagnosed by a laboratory test of the stool.
- Sometimes the diarrhea is so severe that a person needs to be hospitalized.
- Young children and the elderly may have more severe symptoms.

### The Spread of Shigella

Shigella can be spread by the following:

- from one infected person to another person
- from eating food that has been contaminated by an infected person
- from flies breeding in infected feces and then contaminating food
- from drinking or swimming in contaminated water



## Treatment for Diarrhea Caused by Shigella

Shigella can be treated with antibiotics.

Persons who do not take antibiotics usually get better within 5 to 7 days.

Treatment with antibiotics usually makes the person get or feel better sooner.

There is no vaccine to prevent shigella.

If young children and babies have diarrhea and fever for more than 1 day, call your doctor or clinic.

## Other Treatment

- Do not use over-the-counter medicines to stop the diarrhea.
- Eat light foods and clear liquids.
- People who have severe diarrhea need large amounts of fluids. Sometimes intravenous (IV) fluids may be required.



**Do not prepare or serve food if you have shigella.  
Do not go to work in food service, childcare settings, or  
healthcare jobs if you have diarrhea.**

## How to protect yourself and your family from shigella



The best way to protect yourself and your family from shigella is careful and frequent handwashing with soap, especially after going to the bathroom, after changing diapers, and before preparing foods or beverages.

Supervise handwashing of toddlers and small children after they use the toilet.

Persons who change diapers of children with shigella should get rid of the diapers in a closed-lid garbage can, and should wash their hands carefully with soap and water. Wipe down the diaper changing area with a disinfectant.

Cover food that could be exposed to flies, such as at picnics.

When traveling to areas or countries where the water supply may not be clean, drink only boiled or bottled water and eat only cooked hot foods or fruits that you peel yourself.



### How to Wash Hands Well



Rub both hands on the top and bottom with soap for 20 seconds.



Use paper towels or clean terry cloth towels for drying.



Use the paper towel to turn off the water faucet in a public place.

Wash hands carefully after using the bathroom or changing diapers. Clean toilet with disinfectant. Clean toilet handle and faucets. Keep towels clean.

## Shigella Infection is a Reportable Illness

If you are diagnosed with shigella infection, your doctor will send a report to the County Health & Human Services Agency. You may be contacted to find out how you got infected. This helps prevent the illness from spreading to others.

For more information about this illness, see the website for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

**To report Shigella in San Diego County, call (619) 515-6620.**

