

Shigella

Shigella is a bacterium that causes a diarrheal disease. There are about 500,000 cases of diarrhea in the United States annually. Symptoms normally occur within one to two days after being infected with the bacteria and can last five to seven days.

What are the symptoms?

- Diarrhea
- Abdominal pain
- Fever
- Tenesmus (painful sensation of needing to pass stools even when bowels are empty)

How is it spread?

Shigella is spread by contaminated hands touching your food or mouth. Contamination can be found on toys, bathroom fixtures, changing tables, diapers, etc).

- Food can be contaminated with shigella by food handlers who were infected.
- Swallowing recreational or drinking water that was contaminated by infected fecal matter
- Exposure to feces through sexual contact

How is it diagnosed and treated?

- Primary care provider evaluation and laboratory evaluation
- The laboratory also can do special tests to determine if antibiotics are best to treat the infection

Are there complications?

- Diarrhea and vomiting may cause the body to lose a lot of fluids, causing dehydration.
- Rarely, post-infectious arthritis, blood stream infections, seizures, and hemolytic-uremic syndrome (HUS) may occur.

How can shigella be prevented?

- Carefully wash hands with soap and water often.
- If you or your child are sick, stay home from work or school.
- If you care for a child in diapers who has shigella, promptly discard the soiled diapers in a lidded/lined garbage can, and wash your hands and the child's hands carefully with soap and water immediately after changing the diaper.
- Avoid swallowing water from ponds, lakes or untreated swimming pools.
- Avoid sexual activity with those who have diarrhea or who recently recovered from bacteria.

Should the sick individual be isolated?

- Yes, an infected person should be kept away from other people until person feels well again.

When can the individual return to the general population?

- When the person feels well again and diarrhea has stopped for at least 48 hours. Food handlers and healthcare workers should wait until diarrhea has stopped for at least 72 hours.

Should facilities do special cleaning?

- Special cleaning is not necessary. Routine cleaning with EPA approved products is recommended.

For more information, call the Genesee County Health Department at (810) 257-1017.