

**What is *Shigella* disease?**

Shigellosis is a bacterial infection affecting the intestinal tract. Most cases are seen in the summer and early fall and occur as single cases or outbreaks.

**Who is at risk for *Shigella*?**

Anyone can get shigellosis but it is recognized more often in young children. Those who may be at greater risk include children in day care centers, foreign travelers to certain countries, institutionalized people and active homosexuals. Animals are not infected nor do they carry *Shigella*.

**What are the symptoms of *Shigella*?**

People exposed to *Shigella* may experience mild or severe diarrhea, often with fever and traces of blood or mucous in the stool. Some infected people may not show any symptoms.

**How soon do symptoms appear?**

The symptoms may appear one to seven days after exposure but usually within one to three days.

**How is *Shigella* spread?**

*Shigella* is found in the intestinal tract of infected people who, in turn may contaminate food or water. The bacteria are spread by eating or drinking contaminated food or water or by direct or indirect contact with fecal material from an infected person.

**When and for how long is a person able to spread the disease?**

*Shigella* can be spread for as long as the organism can be isolated from a person's stool. People can pass *Shigella* in their stool for up to four weeks and possibly longer in asymptomatic people. Certain antibiotics may shorten the carrier phase.

**How is a person diagnosed?**

A positive diagnosis is obtained by culturing the stool of a person who may be infected.

**What is the treatment?**

Most people with shigellosis will recover on their own. Some may require fluids to prevent dehydration. Antibiotics can be used to treat severe cases or to shorten the carrier phase which may be important for food handlers, children in day care, or institutionalized individuals.

**Does past infection make a person immune?**

No.

**Should children or others be excluded from day care, work or other activities if they have shigellosis?**

All children should be excluded from day care until diarrhea ceases and two successive negative stool cultures are obtained.

All food handlers and health care workers should be excluded from handling food or caring for patients until

diarrhea ceases and two successive negative stool cultures are obtained.

**What can be done to prevent the spread of shigellosis disease?**

Since the bacteria are passed in feces, the single most important prevention activity is careful hand washing with soap after using the toilet.

**Additional Information:**

Call the North Dakota Department of Health at 800.472.2180.

**This disease is a reportable condition. As mandated by North Dakota law, any incidence of this disease shall be reported to the North Dakota Department of Health.**

Resources:

American Academy of Pediatrics. [Children In Out-of-Home Child Care]. In: Pickering LK, ed. Red Book: 2003 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases. 26th ed. Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics; 2003:[123-137].

Control of Communicable Disease Manual, 18th Edition-2004, Heymann, David, MD ed.