

# Shigellosis

## FACT SHEET



Washtenaw County  
Health Department

### What is Shigellosis?

Shigellosis is a disease caused by bacteria that infect the intestines. This is one of the easiest germs to give to others because it only takes a few bacteria to make you sick. The germ is found in an infected person's bowel movements or in contaminated food or water.

### What are the symptoms?

- Stomach ache
- Fever
- Diarrhea that may contain blood and mucus
- Constant pressure to have a bowel movement
- Headache
- Convulsions or seizures

Symptoms usually start 1 to 3 days after infection with the bacteria and last for 4 to 7 days. Some people may not feel sick.

### How is it spread?

Shigellosis is spread to others when infected people do not wash their hands after using the bathroom or after changing the diaper of a child with this illness. The bacteria may be spread up to four weeks after illness. Asymptomatic carriers may transmit infections. Food can be contaminated from flies, sewage or infected food handlers.

### How is it treated?

If you do have this disease, the doctor may give you a special medicine to take. Make sure that you take all of the medicine. **Do not stop taking the medicine even if you feel better.** If anyone in your household has similar symptoms please contact a healthcare provider for testing. **Do not** use anti-diarrhea medicine, such as Imodium (loperamide) as it can make the illness worse.

### What do I do if I have Shigellosis?

- **Do not** prepare food.
- **Wash** your hands after using the bathroom.
- **Do not** go swimming while you have diarrhea.
- Clean the bathroom, including the toilet flushing handle, water faucets and doorknobs, with one tablespoon bleach in 1 gallon water (make a fresh solution every day).
- Drink plenty of fluids, such as water and juice, to reduce the risk of dehydration.

### When children are infected with Shigella you should:

- Wash your hands and the child's hands after changing diapers or using the bathroom.
- Put disposable diapers in a plastic bag and throw out in a tightly closed garbage can.
- Keep sick children away from other children until they are well. Children may need healthcare approval to return to childcare or preschool.
- Wash dirty sheets, clothes, and cloth diapers in **hot** soapy water and dry in a dryer.
- Wash toys that can be put in a child's mouth after each child's use — with one tablespoon bleach in 1 gallon water (make a fresh solution everyday).

If you are a food service worker, a health care worker, or a childcare worker, report your illness to your supervisor and do not work until you are no longer ill and your medical provider says it is okay to return to work.

### How is it prevented?

- Wash your hands often, especially before preparing food and eating, and after using the bathroom or changing diapers.
- Teach your children how to wash their hands.
- Keep your bathroom clean.
- Avoid swallowing water from ponds, lakes, or untreated pools.

*This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information contact your health care provider or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).*