

ALLEGAN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Office Administration

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Bioterrorism Preparedness

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Personal Health

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Communicable Disease

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Environmental Health

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Resource Recovery

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Shigellosis

What is Shigellosis?

Shigellosis is an infectious disease caused by bacteria (*shigella*) in the intestines.

What are the symptoms?

- Stomach ache
- Fever
- Diarrhea that may contain blood and mucus
- Constant pressure to have a bowel movement
- Nausea/vomiting

Symptoms 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?

Shigella is found in a person's stool. It is easily 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. This is one of the easiest illnesses to spread to others because it only takes a few bacteria to make you sick. Food may become contaminated by infected food handlers who forgot to wash their hands with soap and water after using the bathroom. Vegetables can become contaminated if they are harvested from a field with sewage in it. Water may become contaminated with the bacteria if sewage runs into it, or if someone with shigellosis swims in or plays with it (wading pools, splash tables).

How is it treated?

Persons with mild infections usually recover on their own. However, appropriated antibiotic treatment kills the bacteria and may shorten the illness by a few days. Make sure that you take all of the medication, even if you feel better.

If you have Shigellosis:

- Do not prepare food
- Wash your hands after using the bathroom
- 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.

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 OK to return to work.

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
- 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 every day).

How is Shigellosis 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

More information can be found at www.cdc.gov

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, call your health care provider or the Allegan County Health Department at 269-673-5411.