

SHIGELLOSIS (*Shigella*)



What is shigellosis and what are the symptoms?

Shigellosis is an infectious disease caused by a group of bacteria called *Shigella*. Most people who are infected with *Shigella* develop **diarrhea** (sometimes bloody), **fever**, and **stomach cramping**. Symptoms typically start **1-2 days** after being exposed to the bacteria. Sometimes people infected with *Shigella* have no symptoms at all, but they can still pass the bacteria to others.

How long does it last?

Most people with shigellosis typically feel better in **5 to 7 days**. People with mild symptoms usually recover with fluids and rest. Some people with severe symptoms may need to be hospitalized.

How does it spread?

Shigella can spread very easily from one person to another. The bacteria are in the stools of people with shigellosis while they have diarrhea and can stay in their stools for up to a few weeks after the diarrhea has stopped. Transmission of *Shigella* infections occurs in the following ways:

- **Person-to-person contact:** Most infections occur when the bacteria passes from the stool or soiled fingers of one person to the mouth of another person.
- **Food:** Eating foods that were prepared by someone who is sick with shigellosis.
- **Water:** Swallowing water while swimming or drinking water contaminated with *Shigella* bacteria.

How can I prevent *Shigella* infections?

Wash your hands with soap and water before and after preparing or eating foods, and after using the bathroom or changing a diaper.



Avoid swallowing water from ponds, lakes, and untreated swimming pools, and, if you have diarrhea, avoid swimming until your symptoms have resolved.



Avoid sexual activity with people who have diarrhea or recently had diarrhea, and, if you have diarrhea, wait to have sex until your symptoms have resolved.



If you have diarrhea, **do not handle, prepare, or cook foods** for others at home or at your job* until your symptoms have resolved.



If you think you might have shigellosis, contact your health care provider. Visit www.dph.illinois.gov or contact your [local health department](#) for more information.

*Cases shall not work as food handlers or in sensitive occupations until diarrhea has ceased for at least 24 hours and two consecutive negative stool specimens are obtained.