

Sex and Shigellosis

What is shigellosis?

Shigellosis is a disease that causes:

- Stomach cramps
- Fever
- Diarrhea (often bloody)

Some people have no symptoms, but can spread the disease to others.

What causes shigellosis?

Shigellosis is caused by a bacteria called *Shigella*. It is found in feces (shit).

Who gets it?

Anyone can get shigellosis, but men who have sex with other men get shigellosis more often than others. People with weakened immune systems (HIV +, cancer, etc.) often get sicker than others.

How do you get it?

You can get shigellosis when feces (shit) comes in contact with your mouth. This can happen during oral/anal sex play, for example when you use your fingers, hands, or sex toys for anal play and then touch your mouth. Even if you can't see it, the feces that get into your mouth can make you sick.

How can I avoid shigellosis?

- Play safely, follow safe sex guidelines.
- Wash anus and surrounding areas before, after, and between sex play.
- Use condoms or other barriers like latex gloves or dental dams.
- Use condoms with sex toys and wash with soap and water before, after, and between sex play.
- Avoid sex and other activities that may expose you to feces with individuals who have diarrhea.
- Wash your hands with lots of soap and warm water often.

What should I do if I think I have shigellosis?

- See your doctor.
- Tell your partners.
- Wash your hands often.
- **Don't have sex until 7 days after symptoms end.**
- **Don't go to work if you work in child care, food service (e.g. restaurants), or health care.**
- Talk with your doctor about ways to reduce your risk.

Shigellosis (*Shigella* infection)

❑ WHAT IS IT?

- ✓ Shigellosis is an infection of the intestines caused by a group of bacteria called *Shigella*.
- ✓ *Shigella* can cause severe infections requiring hospitalization in young children and elderly persons.

❑ SYMPTOMS

- ✓ Illness usually begins 1 to 4 days after swallowing the bacteria and may last 4 to 7 days.
- ✓ Sometimes people have few or no symptoms.
- ✓ Symptoms include:
 - Diarrhea (may be watery or bloody)
 - Fever
 - Stomach cramps
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - Severe cases may cause dehydration (loss of fluids) or convulsions (in young children)

❑ HOW IS IT SPREAD?

- ✓ *Shigella* are present in the stool (bowel movements) of ill persons and for a week or two after recovery.
- ✓ *Shigella* spread when hands, food, water or objects (toys, pens, etc.) become contaminated with the stool of an infected person and then get into someone else's mouth (for example when an infected person does not wash hands well after using the bathroom).
- ✓ The amount of contamination needed to spread the infection is microscopic (too small to see or smell).
- ✓ The bacteria can be spread by infected people even if they don't have symptoms.
- ✓ Flies can spread *shigella* when they have contact with infected stool and then contaminate drinking water or food.

❑ DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

- ✓ *Shigella* infection is identified from a stool culture test.
- ✓ In some cases, antibiotics can be prescribed to shorten both the duration of illness and the length of time bacteria is passed in the stool.
- ✓ Persons with milder illness recover without antibiotic treatment.

- ✓ Anti-diarrhea medications should not be used to treat *Shigella* infection and can make the illness worse.

❑ PREVENTION

- ✓ Shigellosis can be prevented by washing hands carefully with soap and warm water each time you use the bathroom, after changing diapers, and before preparing food and before eating.
- ✓ Children who are not completely toilet-trained in day care centers or in homes should wash hands frequently with adult supervision.
- ✓ People who have shigellosis should not prepare food or pour water for others until they are better and have been told it is safe by their healthcare provider or by Public Health.
- ✓ When possible, young children with *Shigella* infection who are still in diapers should not be in contact with uninfected children.
- ✓ Pay special attention to the proper disposal of soiled diapers and other human waste.
- ✓ Keep kitchen work surfaces clean.
- ✓ Children and adults with diarrhea should not use public swimming areas until they are better.

❑ IMPORTANT!

- ✓ **Washington State law requires health departments to restrict the activities of persons with Shigellosis in certain settings.**
- ✓ **Children with *Shigella* infection should not attend child care programs, and food handlers, child care workers and healthcare workers with direct patient care should not perform these activities until they have been treated, are no longer ill and have been instructed that it is safe to return to these activities by their local public health department.**

Report all King County cases to
Public Health by calling (206) 296-4774.

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