

Shigellosis

FACT SHEET

What is Shigellosis?

Shigellosis is a disease caused by a group of bacteria called *Shigella*. The bacteria are found in the stools of infected people. Most infections are the result of the bacteria passing from the stools or unwashed hands of an infected person to the mouth of another person. This happens when good hygiene and proper hand washing techniques are not followed.

Shigella can also be passed in contaminated food. The food becomes contaminated when infected food handlers do not wash their hands after using the toilet. Flies can breed in infected stool and then land on and contaminate food. Contaminated food may look or smell fine. Water can also be contaminated if sewage runs into it or someone with shigellosis swims in it.

Who Can Get Shigellosis?

Anyone can get Shigellosis, but people at increased risk include:

- People who travel to certain foreign countries
- Men who have sex with men
- People who live in institutions

What are the Symptoms?

The symptoms of Shigellosis include:

- Diarrhea
- Stomach cramps
- Fever
- Vomiting or upset stomach

What is the Treatment?

People with mild cases often recover on their own. For more serious cases, a physician can prescribe antibiotics to treat shigellosis.

How Can You Prevent Shigellosis?

To prevent shigellosis:

- Wash hands carefully after using the toilet, after changing diapers and before preparing or eating food
- Avoid swallowing recreational water (pools, hot tubs, lakes or rivers)
- Keep diapered children or anyone with diarrhea out of swimming pools
- Help children to wash their hands properly
- Avoid using ice or drinking untreated water when travelling in countries where the water supply might be unsafe