

Shigellosis (Shigella)

What is **Shigellosis**?



Shigellosis is an infectious disease caused by a group of bacteria called shigella. Most that are infected develop diarrhea, fever and stomach cramps starting a day or two after they are exposed to the bacteria. Shigellosis usually resolves in 5 to 7 days. In some persons, especially young children and the elderly, the diarrhea can be so severe that the patient needs to be hospitalized.

How do people catch **Shigella**?

The Shigella bacteria pass from one infected person to the next. Shigella are present in the diarrheal stool of infected persons when they are sick and for a week or two afterwards.

Shigella infections may be acquired from eating contaminated food. Contaminated food may look and smell normal. Food may become contaminated by infected food handlers who forget to

wash their hands with soap after using the bathroom. Shigella infections can also be acquired by drinking or swimming in contaminated water.

How are **Shigella** infections treated?

Shigellosis can usually be treated by antibiotics. Unfortunately, some Shigella bacteria have become resistant to antibiotics and using antibiotics can make the germs more resistant in the future. Persons with mild infections usually recover quickly without antibiotic treatment. Therefore, when many persons in a community are infected, antibiotics are sometimes used selectively to treat only the more severe cases.

Some tips for preventing the spread of **shigellosis**.

- Wash hands with soap carefully and frequently, especially after going to the bathroom, after changing diapers, and before preparing foods or beverages.
- Dispose of soiled diapers properly.
- Disinfect diaper changing areas after use.
- Keep children with diarrhea out of child care settings.
- Supervise hand washing of toddlers and small children after they use the toilet.
- Persons with diarrheal illness should not prepare food for others,
- Avoid drinking pool water.

Any questions, contact Volusia County Health Department, (386) 274-0651 or (386) 274 -0633.