

# SHIGELLOSIS \*

## What is Shigellosis?

Shigellosis is an infection of the intestines caused by the *shigella* bacteria.

## How is it spread?

Shigellosis is spread mainly by the fecal-oral route. People can become infected in several ways including: eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated; touching contaminated surfaces and then placing their hand in their mouth; or having direct contact with another person who is infected and showing symptoms.

## What are the signs and symptoms?

The signs and symptoms of shigellosis may include headache, abdominal pain, diarrhea, fever, nausea and sometimes vomiting. Loss of appetite and loose stools often persist for several days. Dehydration, especially in infants and the elderly, may occur.

## What is the incubation period and how long is it communicable?

The incubation period is usually one (1) to three (3) days but may range from 12 to 96 hours. It is communicable during the acute infection and until the *shigella* bacteria is no longer present in the feces, usually in about four weeks. Appropriate antibiotic treatment should reduce the carriage to a few days.

## How can Shigellosis be prevented?

The best prevention is to wash your hands vigorously with soap and water especially:

- After:**
- Toilet visits
  - Cleaning up vomitus or diarrhea (use gloves)
  - Handling diapers (use gloves)
  - Handling soiled clothes or linens (use gloves)
  - Contact with a symptomatic person
- Before:**
- Eating

*It is recommended to use spray bottles to apply the disinfectant (1 part bleach to 9 part of cool water to be prepared daily) to contaminated surfaces such as toilets, sinks, floors, tables, water fountains or any areas where a sick individual has been.*

## What should I do about it?

Persons who have these symptoms should see their physicians. This is a **reportable disease** and should be reported to the Santa Rosa County Health Department (SRCHD). Children and adults with this illness should be free of symptoms for a minimum of 24 hrs before returning to childcare/school/work. Sensitive workers need to be cleared by the SRCHD.

For more information, please contact the SRCHD at 850-983-5200.

