

# Shigella

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## What is *Shigella*?

*Shigella* is a bacterium that causes an illness called shigellosis. This illness affects the stomach and intestines.

## How do I get shigellosis?

You must ingest (swallow or eat) the *Shigella* bacteria to become sick. *Shigella* bacteria is usually spread through the following:

- People who are infected with *Shigella* will have the bacteria in their feces (stools). If people do not properly wash their hands after using the restroom or changing a diaper, and then touch food others will eat or objects people will put in their mouths (e.g., toys), they can spread the bacteria to other people.
- Some people may carry and spread the *Shigella* bacteria without ever having symptoms. An infected person can spread the bacteria for as long as four weeks.
- *Shigella* is **NOT** spread from one person to another by coughing or sneezing, sharing drinks, hugging or kissing.

## Symptoms

Symptoms begin 12-96 hours (usually 1-3 days) after ingesting the bacteria.

Symptoms include:

- Diarrhea – sometimes bloody
- Fever
- Stomach pain and cramping
- Nausea – sometimes with vomiting
- Dehydration (due to diarrhea and vomiting)

## Prevention

- Wash your hands before preparing food or handling dishes or baby toys.
- Always wash your hands after using the restroom. You can have and spread the bacteria even if you do not have any symptoms.
- Always wash your hands and the child's hands after diapering or helping with toilet training.
- Avoid swallowing water from pools, lakes or untreated water sources.

## Treatment of shigellosis

Most symptoms will go away on their own in a few days (5-7 days). If symptoms persist or are severe, see your health care provider. Treatment with antibiotics can reduce the amount of time that a person is able to spread the disease.

### ***If you think you have shigellosis:***

- Do not prepare food for others.
- If your job includes handling food, working with children or you work in health care, do not go to work and see your health care provider.
- Children who might have shigellosis should not go to child care settings – especially if they have diarrhea.



### **Hand washing steps:**

1. Use soap and warm running water.
2. Scrub hands for at least 20 seconds; use a nail brush.
3. Wash all surfaces:
  - Between fingers
  - Under fingernails
  - Back of hands
  - Wrists
4. Rinse well and dry hands with a clean paper towel.