

West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources Information for the Public Regarding Shigellosis

What is shigellosis?

Shigellosis is a serious gastrointestinal illness caused by the *Shigella* bacteria. *Shigella* is very easy to spread from one person to another. It is very serious in babies, older adults, and people who are not well.

How is shigellosis spread?

Shigella is shed in the stool of infected people and is most often spread:

- on hands that have not been washed after using the bathroom;
- from touching others or by touching food or drinks that others will eat; and
- by sexual practices that involve fecal-oral contact.

In countries with inadequate sewage disposal, flies can carry *Shigella* from feces to food.

What are the symptoms of shigellosis?

The symptoms of *Shigella* infection are:

- sudden stomach pain;
- stomach cramps;
- diarrhea;
- fever;
- vomiting; and
- blood, pus, and mucus in the stool.

Symptoms begin about one day to one week after a person becomes infected and can last up to one week. Some people may have no symptoms but can still spread the infection to others.

Can shigellosis be cured?

Antibiotics may be used to treat shigellosis, but there are some resistant strains.

How can shigellosis be prevented?

Washing hands with soap and running water is the most important way to prevent the spread of *Shigella*. Always wash hands:

- after using the bathroom;
- after changing diapers;

- after cleaning the toilet;
- after handling soiled towels or linens;
- before eating; and
- before preparing food.

People with diarrhea should not fix or serve food that will be eaten by others.

Never send a child with *Shigella* to a day care center, especially if the child has diarrhea.

Use day care centers that are very good, which do the following:

- the staff washes their hands after changing each diaper;
- the staff cleans the changing area after each child;
- the children must wash their hands often;
- the children must wash their hands after using the toilet;
- ill children are cared for at home or in a separate room; and
- the facility is clean and sanitary.