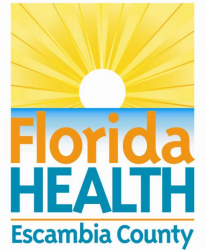


Shigellosis

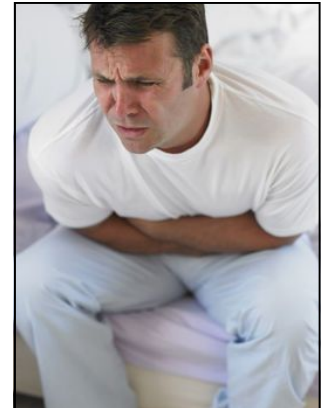


What is Shigellosis?

Shigellosis is an infectious disease caused by a group of bacteria called *Shigella*. The *Shigella* germ is a microscopic living creature that passes from person to person. *Shigella* were discovered over 100 years ago by a Japanese Scientist named Shiga, for whom they are named. Every year, about 14,000 cases of shigellosis are reported in the United States. Because many milder cases are not diagnosed or reported, the actual number of infections may be twenty times greater. Shigellosis is particularly common and causes recurrent problems in settings where hygiene is poor and can sometimes sweep through entire communities. It is more common in summer than winter. Children, especially toddlers aged 2 to 4, are the most likely to get shigellosis. Many cases are related to the spread of illness in child-care settings, and many are the result of the spread of the illness in families with small children.

Signs and Symptoms

Most who are infected with *Shigella* develop diarrhea, fever, and stomach cramps starting a day or two after they are exposed to the bacteria. The diarrhea is often bloody. Shigellosis usually resolves in 5 to 7 days. Persons with shigellosis in the United States rarely require hospitalization. A severe infection with high fever may be associated with seizures in children less than 2 years old. Some persons who are infected may have no symptoms at all, but may still pass the *Shigella* bacteria to others.



Transmission

The *Shigella* bacteria pass from one infected person to the next. *Shigella* are present in the diarrheal stools of infected persons while they are sick and for up to a week or two afterwards. Most *Shigella* infections are the result of the bacterium passing from stools or soiled fingers of one person to the mouth of another person. This happens when basic hygiene and handwashing habits are inadequate. It is particularly likely to occur among toddlers who are not fully toilet-trained. Family members and playmates of such children are at high risk of becoming infected.



Prevention and Treatment

Currently, there is no vaccine to prevent shigellosis. However, the spread of *Shigella* from an infected person to other persons can be stopped by frequent and careful handwashing with soap and water. Handwashing among children should be frequent and supervised by an adult in daycare centers and homes with children who have not been fully toilet trained.

Many different kinds of germs can cause diarrhea, so establishing the cause will help guide treatment. Determining that *Shigella* is the cause of the illness depends on laboratory tests that identify *Shigella* in the stools of an infected person.

Children and adults with this illness should be free of symptoms for a minimum of 24 hours before returning to childcare/school/work. People who work in the food handling and health care business (sensitive workers) need to be cleared by the FDOH-EC before returning to their jobs.

Persons with diarrhea usually recover completely, although it may be several months before their bowel habits are entirely normal. Once someone has had shigellosis, they are not likely to get infected with that specific type again for at least several years. However, they can still get infected with other types of *Shigella*.

Local Snapshot

During 2012, the FDOH-EC Epidemiology Program investigated and reported a total of 178 cases of *Shigella*, which represents the largest community-wide *Shigella* outbreak in Escambia County since 2003 (286 cases). It also represented a total of 10% of all the *Shigella* cases reported in Florida during 2012.

For more information, please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website: <http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/shigellosis/>