

# Shigellosis

## What is it?

Shigella is a germ that causes diarrhoea

## What are the symptoms? / How do I know if I have it?

If you get Shigella it usually causes:

- Diarrhoea
- High temperatures
- Feeling sick (nausea)
- Vomiting.
- Stomach pains or cramps.

There may be blood or mucous in your poo. The symptoms begin 1-7 days (usually 1-3 days) after being in contact with the infection. Symptoms usually last 4-7 days, but can last longer.

## How is it transmitted? / How did I get it?

Shigellosis is passed from person to person by contact with poo. This happens if hands are not washed properly, usually after going to the toilet or changing nappies. Oral and anal sex can pass it from person to person.

You can also get it from eating food that has the bacteria in it.

A person can have Shigella in their poo for some weeks and have no symptoms. They can still pass it on to others.

## How is it prevented? / How can I make sure I don't get it?

Spreading Shigella can be prevented by:

- washing of hands with soap and water for at least 10 seconds:
- After going to the toilet.
- After changing nappies.
- After any possible exposures to poo, like oral and anal sex
- Before handling food or caring for other people.
- Washing vegetables and fruit that are eaten raw.

People who have shigellosis should not have sex where there is any contact with the bottom (anus).

You should not go to work while you have diarrhoea especially people who handle food in their jobs (for example chefs or butchers). People who work with children or the elderly should also not go to work if they have the infection.

At home, people with shigellosis should not prepare food or care for others while they are sick.

Children, especially those in nappies, should be kept home from childcare until 24 hours after their diarrhoea has stopped. Children and adults should not swim for 2 weeks after the diarrhoea has stopped.

## How can the nurse/ Doctor tell me if I have it?

Diagnosis can be diagnosed by your doctor. It requires a poo sample.

Shigellosis can affect anyone. Children, and men who have sex with men, are at greatest risk. People with poor immune systems and the elderly are at greater risk of having a more severe illness.

### **How can I get rid of it?**

Drinking lots of fluids is important as having diarrhoea can make you dehydrated. It is important to seek medical attention if needed. If it is severe, it is usually treated with antibiotics from your doctor.

### **Who do I need to tell and why?**

You may tell sexual partners that you have Shigellosis. They will need to be tested and treated if they have symptoms. Ask your doctor if you aren't sure who you need to tell. They can help you with this.

This fact sheet is just some general information. If you are worried about your health go and see a doctor.

### **For more information or support visit:**

For more information on STIs and safe sex visit the Play Safe website:

[www.playsafe.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.playsafe.health.nsw.gov.au)

Sexual Health Info Link is a service that you can call up for information on STIs and sexual health. It's anonymous and non-judgemental. Call: 1800 451 624 or visit <https://www.shil.nsw.gov.au/>

"Let them know" allows you to send an anonymous messages to tell someone you've had sex with that they have come into contact with the infection: <http://www.letthemknow.org.au/>