



Shigellosis (Bacillary Dysentery)

What is it?

Shigellosis is an intestinal infection that involves the large and part of the small intestine.

Caused by:

It is caused by a rod-shaped bacterium called Shigella.

Symptoms:

People infected with this bacterium may experience mild to severe diarrhea (which can be watery, bloody or mucousy). There may also be vomiting, a fever, nausea and cramps. It can last for 4 to 7 days.

Incubation:

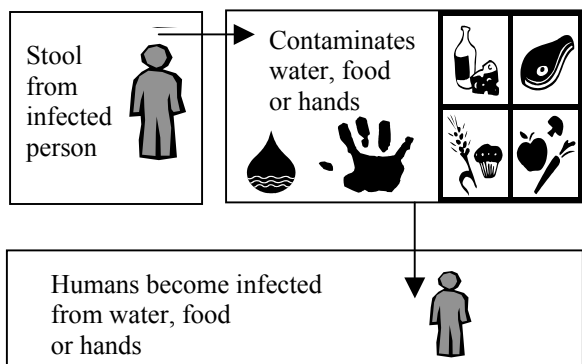
After you come in contact with this bacterium, you will usually feel symptoms in 1 to 3 days, but may range from 12 hours to one week.

Treatment:

Fluid and electrolyte replacement is important to prevent dehydration. Antibiotics are used in severe cases only because the bacteria are resistant to many drugs. It is better if you don't use anti-diarrhea medicine because these drugs make it harder for your body to eliminate the bacteria.

Communicable:

You can pass this infection to others while you are ill and until the bacteria are no longer found in the feces (usually within 4 weeks after illness).



Transmitted by:

It is spread both directly by hand-to-mouth transfer of contaminated fecal matter and indirectly when individuals eat food, or drink water contaminated with the bacteria. A very small amount of bacteria can cause the illness. People who have the bacteria, but have no symptoms can also transmit it.

Complications:

Young children need to be treated by their doctor because they are susceptible to having convulsions. Household members are also at risk for catching this disease.

This disease is associated with HUS (hemolytic uremic syndrome), a leading cause of kidney failure, and Reiter's disease (reactive arthritis).

Other:

Food handlers and health care workers may **NOT** work until they have submitted two negative stool specimens taken at least 24 hours apart, 48 hours after the last dose of medication.

Prevention:

1. Wash hands well, immediately after using the toilet and always before handling or eating food. Children may need help with washing their hands.
2. People with shigellosis should not prepare food or pour drinks for others until they can prove they no longer carry the shigella bacterium.
3. Wash hands after contact with infected individuals.
4. Ensure proper disposal of sewage.
5. Protect public water supplies from fecal contamination.
6. Ensure milk and milk products are pasteurized.
7. Control flies (e.g. Screening of windows and doors).
8. Travellers to areas with inadequate sanitary facilities should take precautions regarding food and water.

Sources:

1. Heymann D.L. (Ed.). (2004). *Control of Communicable Diseases Manual*, (18th ed.). Washington, DC: American Public Health Association
2. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. *Shigellosis*. Retrieved winter 2005, from http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/shigellosis_g.htm

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