

# Shigellosis

## Frequently Asked Questions



### What is shigellosis?

Shigellosis is a disease caused by the bacteria *Shigella*. It causes diarrheal illness.

### What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of shigellosis can include:

- Diarrhea
- Stomach cramps
- Fever
- Nausea
- Vomiting

### How does it spread?

Shigellosis is spread in several ways. It is usually spread from people who are infected with this germ, who pass the bacteria in their bowel movements (stool). If infected persons do not wash their hands well, this germ can get into the food or drink they are handling, and others can then get sick by eating the contaminated food or drink. People can also get this germ on their hands when changing diapers or assisting a child with toileting. It only takes a few germs to cause infection, and the germ is easily spread.

### Who is at risk of developing shigellosis?

Anyone can get this infection. In Philadelphia, shigellosis has been associated with outbreaks involving homeless shelters and childcare facilities, along with a larger community-wide outbreak.

### How is it diagnosed and treated?

A laboratory test must be done to determine if someone has *Shigella* in their stool. Several antibiotics may be used to treat this infection. Your doctor will prescribe the most appropriate antibiotic for this illness if necessary. Treatment with antibiotics can shorten the length of the illness and help to clear the germ from the stool.

### What should I do if I think I have it?

If you think you have shigellosis, you should contact your doctor and discuss your symptoms.

### How is it prevented?

- Frequent and careful hand washing is an important way to prevent shigellosis from spreading.
- People with shigellosis should not prepare or serve food, or serve drinks to others until they have shown that they are no longer carrying the bacteria, or until their diarrhea has been gone for at least 2 days.

For more information contact your doctor, refer to <http://www.phila.gov/Health/> or contact the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, Division of Disease Control at 215-685-6740.

