



## Shigella Fact Sheet

### What is Shigella?

Shigella is an infection of the gut caused by a bacterium called Shigella. It is a very common disease in Oklahoma. Most people become ill in the summer and early fall.

### Who gets Shigella?

Anyone can get Shigella. Young children, especially those who are in day care centers, are infected more often.

### How is Shigella spread?

Shigella is found in the feces (stool) of an infected person. It is spread by close contact with an infected person or eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water.

### What are the symptoms?

People infected with Shigella may have mild to severe diarrhea, fever, and painful bloody, mucous stools. Some infected persons may not have any symptoms.

### How soon do symptoms appear?

Diarrhea may appear 1 to 7 days after infection, but usually within 2 to 3 days.

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### **How long is a person able to spread Shigella?**

During your illness and until the bacteria is no longer in the feces (stool), may be as long as 4 weeks (if not treated with antibiotics). Appropriate antibiotic treatment usually reduces the time to a few days.

### **Should infected people be excluded from school or work?**

Since Shigella is found in the feces (stool), people with diarrhea should not go to school or work. However, people who handle food, attend daycare centers, or are health care workers should be treated, and have no Shigella in their stools (two negative stool cultures) before they return to work or the daycare center. If several children in a daycare center have Shigella, and are being treated, they might be allowed to return to the daycare center earlier, if they can be segregated from the well children. Everyone should carefully wash their hands each time after using the toilet and before handling food.

### **What is the treatment for Shigella?**

Most people will recover on their own. Persons with severe diarrhea, especially small children and elderly people, should see a doctor.

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### **What can be done to prevent the spread of Shigella?**

Everyone should carefully wash their hands after using the toilet or handling dirty diapers, and before eating or preparing food.

*For further information, contact the  
Oklahoma City-County Health  
Department (405) 425-4437*

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