

# Shigellosis Fact Sheet

## What Is Shigellosis?

Shigellosis is an infection of the bowel (gut) caused by the bacteria called Shigella.

## How is it spread?

Spread can occur by eating food or drinking water that has been contaminated by very small amounts of faeces (i.e. 'poo') from infected people.

Spread can also occur through oral-anal contact

## Signs and symptoms

Symptoms usually develop between 1 to 3 days after becoming infected but may take up to a week to appear.

Most people with Shigella infection experience diarrhoea (sometimes with blood or mucus), fever, vomiting and stomach cramps.

The illness usually lasts 3 to 4 days but may last longer, particularly in very young, elderly and severely underweight people.

Some infected people only have a very mild illness or no symptoms at all.

## Infectious period

People with shigellosis can pass the infection on to others while they are ill and for up to 4 weeks after their diarrhoea has stopped. Antibiotic treatment will help stop spread of the infection to other people.

## Who is at risk?

The most severe infections occur in very young, elderly and severely underweight people. Children who attend childcare facilities are at greater risk of infections.

Spread occurs when children share toys or food that have become contaminated and place it in their mouths. Particular care has to be taken wherever there are children in nappies.

Travelers to developing countries or to remote communities where sanitation and hygiene are poor are at higher risk of contracting diarrhoeal illness.

Men or women who have anal sex are more at risk of shigellosis through oral-anal contact.

## Treatment

It is important to prevent and/or treat dehydration caused by vomiting or diarrhoea. Anyone with vomiting or diarrhoea should drink extra fluids to avoid dehydration. Drinking oral glucose/electrolyte solution is very effective. If children do not want to drink this solution, diluted fruit juice may be given (1 part juice to 4 parts water).

Continue to offer normal feeds to babies plus extra fluids in between feeds.

Children with diarrhoea, who vomit or who do not want extra fluids should see a doctor. Anyone with diarrhoea that will not stop or severe diarrhoea, or who have symptoms that worry them, should see a doctor.

Do not take medicine that stops vomiting or diarrhoea, especially do not give to children, except when prescribed by a doctor.

When the diagnosis of shigellosis is confirmed by a lab test, the doctor may prescribe antibiotics. This can reduce the risk of complications and the spread of infection to others.

## Prevention

Good hygiene is the best way to prevent shigellosis.

Hands should be washed thoroughly with warm soapy water:

- after going to the toilet
- before preparing or handling food
- after every nappy change
- after changing soiled linen.

Other measures:

- never change nappies on tables or benches where food is prepared or eaten
- clean nappy changing areas with warm soapy water and disinfectant after every nappy change
- clean books, toys, equipment, furnishings, floors and toilets regularly (including toilet door handles)
- wash raw fruit and vegetables carefully before eating
- make sure that toilets and bathrooms in the home are working. If you rent, tell your landlord or housing provider if your toilet or plumbing is broken.

## How can it be controlled?

Anyone with diarrhoea should not go to childcare/school for 24 hours after the diarrhoea has stopped.

People with diarrhoea should not prepare or handle food that will be eaten by others.

Anyone with diarrhoea should not swim, wade or paddle in public pools. Doctors and public health workers are interested in preventing outbreaks of diarrhoea.

If there are 2 or more people with diarrhoea in a group or family, call the local Centre for Disease Control.

## Contact

For more information contact the Public Health Unit's Centre for Disease Control in your region.

The full list of contacts of contacts can be found at [NT Health](#).

Location	Address	Phone	Fax	Email
Darwin	Ground Floor, Building 4 Royal Darwin Hospital Rocklands Drive Tiwi NT 0810	(08) 8922 8044 1800 008 002	(08) 8922 8310	<a href="mailto:CDCSurveillance.DARWIN@nt.gov.au">CDCSurveillance.DARWIN@nt.gov.au</a>
Katherine	O'Keef House Katherine Hospital Gorge Road Katherine NT 0850	(08) 8973 9049	(08) 8973 9048	<a href="mailto:CDC.Katherine@nt.gov.au">CDC.Katherine@nt.gov.au</a>
Tennant Creek	Schmidt Street Tennant Creek NT 0860	(08) 8962 4259	(08) 8962 4420	<a href="mailto:CDC.Barkly@nt.gov.au">CDC.Barkly@nt.gov.au</a>
Alice Springs	Disease Control Unit Lower Ground Floor Eurilpa House, 25 Todd Street Alice Springs NT 0870	(08) 8951 7540	(08) 8951 7900	<a href="mailto:CDC.alicesprings@nt.gov.au">CDC.alicesprings@nt.gov.au</a>
Nhulunbuy	Corner Mathew Flinders Way and Chesterfield Court Nhulunbuy NT 0880	(08) 8987 0357	(08) 8987 0500	<a href="mailto:CDCGove.DoH@nt.gov.au">CDCGove.DoH@nt.gov.au</a>