

Shigella Fact Sheet for Childcare

What is Shigella?

Shigella is an organism that causes intestinal illness in adults and children. Most people who are infected with Shigella develop diarrhea, fever, and stomach cramps starting a day or two after they are exposed to the bacterium. Some persons who are infected may have no symptoms at all, but can still pass the bacteria to others.

How do people catch Shigella?

Shigella is present in the stool of infected persons while they are sick and up to 4 weeks afterwards. Most Shigella infections are the result of the bacteria passing from stools or soiled fingers of one person to the mouth of another person. This happens when hygiene and hand washing habits are inadequate.

Children <6 yrs, adults who care for young children, and others living in crowded conditions are at increased risk of outbreaks.

How can Shigella infections be treated?

Antibiotics are effective in shortening the duration of diarrhea and eliminating the Shigella bacteria. Antidiarrheal agents such as loperamide (Imodium) are likely to make the illness worse and should be avoided.

Preventing the spread of shigella:

Careful hand washing is the single most important thing to prevent illness.

Caregivers should wash their hands thoroughly after diaper changing and wash the child's hands carefully with soap and warm water. Dispose of diapers properly in a closed-lid garbage can. Supervise hand washing of toddlers and small children after they use the toilet. Have children wash their hands when arriving at daycare.

Exclude infected attendees and staff from the childcare facility until diarrhea stops and 2 negative stool cultures are obtained at least 24 hours apart. A minimum of 48 hours after last dose of antibiotic taken is needed before specimen collection. During outbreaks notify the department of health and exclude ill staff and attendees from coming to daycare.

People with shigella should not go swimming or do water play for 2 weeks after symptoms resolve.