



# Central Michigan District Health Department

*Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities*



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## Shigellosis

### What is Shigellosis?

Shigellosis is a disease caused by a bacterium that gets into the intestines. This is one of the easiest bacteria to give to others because it only takes a small amount of the organism to make an individual sick.

The germ is found in a person's bowel movements. People spread it to others when they do not wash their hands after using the bathroom, by changing the diaper of a child with this illness, or through sexual activity. People can spread the disease until the germ is no longer present in their stools, usually within four weeks after illness. Signs and symptoms usually begin 1 – 2 days after exposure.

### What are the signs and symptoms of Shigellosis?

- stomachache
- fever
- diarrhea (many loose stools) that can be bloody
- constant pressure to have bowel movement

### How is it spread?

You can get infected with Shigella by:

- Getting Shigella on your hands and touching your mouth. Shigella can get on your hands when you have touched surfaces that are contaminated with the bacteria from someone with the infection.
- Eating food prepared by someone with a Shigella.
- Swallowing recreational water, such as lake water or improperly treated swimming pool water.
- Swallowing contaminated drinking water, such as water from a well that's been contaminated with sewage or flood water.
- Exposure to stool (poop) during sexual contact with someone with a Shigella infection or who has recently recovered from a Shigella infection.

### What is the treatment for Shigellosis?

Around 5 to 7 days after your symptoms start, you should be feeling better. People with mild shigellosis may need only fluids and rest. Antibiotics are not always prescribed; they are usually only prescribed in people with severe cases to help them get better faster.

*Please visit us at our website [www.cmdhd.org](http://www.cmdhd.org)*

### **How can I protect myself?**

You can reduce your chance of getting sick from Shigella by:

- Washing your hands with soap and water
  - Before preparing food and eating.
  - After changing a diaper or helping to clean another person who has defecated.
- If you care for a child in diapers who has shigellosis, promptly throw away the soiled diapers in a covered, lined garbage can. Wash your hands and the child's hands carefully with soap and water right after changing the diaper. Clean up any leaks or spills of diaper contents immediately.
- Avoid swallowing water from ponds, lakes, or untreated swimming pools.
- When traveling internationally, stick to safe eating and drinking habits, and wash hands often with soap and water.
- Avoid having sex (vaginal, anal, and oral) for at least one week after your partner recovers from diarrhea. Practice safe sexual practices for several weeks after your partner has recovered.