

# West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources Information for the Public Regarding Shigellosis

## What is shigellosis?

Shigellosis is a serious gastrointestinal illness caused by the *Shigella* bacteria. *Shigella* is very easy to spread from one person to another. It is very serious in babies, older adults, and people who are not well.

## How is shigellosis spread?

*Shigella* is shed in the stool of infected people and is most often spread:

- on hands that have not been washed after using the bathroom;
- from touching others or by touching food or drinks that others will eat; and
- by sexual practices that involve fecal-oral contact.

In countries with inadequate sewage disposal, flies can carry *Shigella* from feces to food.

## What are the symptoms of shigellosis?

The symptoms of *Shigella* infection are:

- sudden stomach pain;
- stomach cramps;
- diarrhea;
- fever;
- vomiting; and
- blood, pus, and mucus in the stool.

Symptoms begin about one day to one week after a person becomes infected and can last up to one week. Some people may have no symptoms but can still spread the infection to others.

## Can shigellosis be cured?

Antibiotics may be used to treat shigellosis, but there are some resistant strains.

## How can shigellosis be prevented?

Washing hands with soap and running water is the most important way to prevent the spread of *Shigella*. Always wash hands:

- after using the bathroom;
- after changing diapers;

- after cleaning the toilet;
- after handling soiled towels or linens;
- before eating; and
- before preparing food.

People with diarrhea should not fix or serve food that will be eaten by others.

Never send a child with *Shigella* to a day care center, especially if the child has diarrhea.

Use day care centers that are very good, which do the following:

- the staff washes their hands after changing each diaper;
- the staff cleans the changing area after each child;
- the children must wash their hands often;
- the children must wash their hands after using the toilet;
- ill children are cared for at home or in a separate room; and
- the facility is clean and sanitary.