



Facts About *Shigella*

What is *Shigella*?

Shigella is a common, highly contagious germ that causes diarrhea. The usual symptoms associated with this infection are diarrhea, cramping, abdominal pain, chills, headache and fever. The diarrhea may contain blood and mucus.

How is this germ spread?

It is transmitted primarily from person to person through the fecal-oral route. Anyone can become infected by touching something contaminated by stool from an infected person. This includes surfaces in restrooms, other common surfaces, toys and even food prepared by someone who is infected. This germ is easily spread in families and other settings where large numbers of people gather. In fact, a person who has had the germ can continue to spread it for 30 days after they are well if they are not treated with the proper medication.

Why should I be concerned?

The Marion County Health Department has seen a substantial increase in the reported cases of *Shigella*. This fact along with the upcoming holiday break has prompted the health department to notify the community about the recent increase in cases.

Is this a problem in schools?

The majority of those becoming sick are in the preschool age group. However, recently a larger than anticipated number of cases in school-aged children have been reported.

What can be done?

Good hand-washing is essential to prevent the spread of this germ. Anyone experiencing *Shigella*-like symptoms should exclude themselves from work, school or other settings where large numbers of people interact. Anyone who is symptomatic should contact their medical provider for further direction. Anyone with diarrhea should not prepare food for others. Restrooms, toys and other potentially-contaminated surfaces should be frequently cleaned and disinfected with a commercially-prepared disinfectant or a 1:100 bleach solution (approximately 1/4 cup bleach per gallon of tap water).

What if my someone in my family has symptoms?

Contact his or her medical provider for direction. Certain testing must be done to confirm a diagnosis of *Shigella* and certain medications must be prescribed for treatment.

Where can I get more information?

For more information, contact the Marion County Health Department's Communicable Disease program at 221-2117.