



## Shigellosis

### What is shigellosis?

Shigellosis is an infectious disease caused by a group of bacteria called *Shigella*. It mainly infects the large intestine. There are four types of *Shigella* organisms. The most common type in North Carolina has mild to moderate symptoms that do not last very long.

### What are the symptoms?

The most common symptom is diarrhea, but people often have fever, stomach cramps, nausea and sometimes vomiting. The diarrhea stools (bowel movements) may contain blood, mucus and pus. They may also look watery or slimy. Some people with the infection may have no symptoms, but are still able to pass the bacteria to others.

### How is it transmitted?

The infection is passed from human stool to mouth. Stools may contain the germs even when symptoms are not present or have been gone for weeks.

Generally, adults get the infection from contaminated food or water. However, adults who change diapers or care for infants and children and who do not wash their hands properly can infect themselves or others. Toddlers and preschoolers can spread the germ easily because they don't wash their dirty hands as often as they should and they sometimes suck on toys and their fingers.

### How do I know if my child has shigellosis?

The infection is diagnosed by collecting a sample of stool in a cup and taking it to a lab for a stool culture. If a lot of people in a school or child care center have shigellosis, a health care provider may decide to treat their playmates and families, even if they have no symptoms.

### How is it treated?

A five to seven day course of antibiotics (medicine) may be used to treat the infection. Persons are no longer contagious after the second day of treatment.

### School/Child Care Attendance:

A child cannot return to child care until one negative stool sample is obtained. A school-age child may return to school once the diarrhea has stopped. Children with shigellosis who are not toilet trained must be well and must have completed antibiotic therapy before they can safely be around uninfected children.

### Home, School or Child Care Precautions:

Wash hands:

- before, during and after food preparation,
- after using the toilet or helping a child use the toilet and
- before and after diapering a child.
- Have children wash their hands after toileting, diapering and before meals and snacks.
- Keep nails short and clean.
- Disinfect diaper-changing areas after each change. Disinfect toys, toilets, sinks, water fountains and food preparation surfaces at least daily with a solution recommended by the Public Health Division.

- Watch for symptoms among staff or students. Call the Public Health Division if two or more staff or students have symptoms within a 48-hour time span.

For more information call the Guilford County Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health at (336) 641-7777 or visit our website at [www.myguilford.com](http://www.myguilford.com)