

Shigellosis in Child-Care Settings

July 2016 | Page 1 of 2

What is shigellosis?

Shigellosis is an infection of the intestinal tract caused by the bacteria *Shigella*. Shigellosis usually causes severe diarrhea, but other symptoms can include fever, nausea, vomiting, cramps and stools containing blood and/or mucus. A person with shigellosis is most likely to develop symptoms 12–96 hours after becoming infected, and symptoms usually last about 5–7 days. Some infected people may not show any symptoms.

How is shigellosis spread?

Shigella bacteria, the organism that causes shigellosis, are spread by the fecal-oral route, i.e., the bacteria leave an infected person's body in the stool and are spread by contaminated hands, surfaces, food, or water. Shigellosis is highly contagious; a small amount of bacteria can cause a person to become ill.

Are children at child-care settings at greater risk for shigellosis?

Anyone can get shigellosis, but it is more commonly seen in young children. Children in child-care settings, their caregivers and other people living in crowded conditions where personal hygiene is difficult to maintain are at greater risk of infection.

What should be done to monitor for illness in the child-care setting?

- Identify an employee to monitor for and record symptoms of shigellosis/diarrheal illness in children daily
- Ill caregivers and parents of ill children should notify daycare if the caregiver or child has been diagnosed with a communicable disease, such as shigellosis
- Ill caregivers should also inform their supervisor at the child-care setting if they have been diagnosed with a communicable disease
- The daycare should then notify the local health department of any children or caregivers with a communicable disease

What are the exclusion criteria when caregivers or children at the child-care setting develop symptoms of shigellosis?

- All symptomatic persons with a diarrheal illness should be excluded (kept home) from the child-care settings
- Children who develop diarrhea or vomiting while in a group care setting should be separated from the other children and retrieved by a parent as quickly as possible
- Households with ill family members where a day camp is hosted should refrain from hosting the day camp until the criteria below are met for all ill family members

When can a child or caregiver with shigellosis return to the child-care setting?

- The ill person must be symptom free with formed stools for a period of time specified by the local health department
- The local health department will make the determination if additional criteria need to be met, such as further stool testing, in order for the ill person to return to the child-care setting
- Even after an ill person recovers they may still be temporarily carrying the *Shigella* bacteria inside of them, so it's important to always follow the prevention measures and steps outlined below

What activities should be avoided in a daycare setting after shigellosis is diagnosed?

All recreational water activities within day camps or daycares should cease until **two weeks** after the last ill attendee or caregiver has become well. This restriction is all-inclusive and applies to all forms of water activities in these settings including backyard pools, wading pools, water tables, splash pads, sprinklers, etc., because of the high risk of *Shigella* transmission associated with water. When water play activities resume, risk can be reduced by diligently and meticulously washing the hands of all children with soap and water immediately before and after water play, and reminding children not to drink the water or to place wet toys or hands in their mouths during water play.

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July 2016 | Page 2 of 2

What can be done to prevent the spread of shigellosis?

1. Hand Hygiene for caregivers AND children

a. WASH HANDS with water and SOAP:

- upon arrival at the care facility
- after using the toilet
- after changing diapers or helping children with toileting
- after having diaper changed
- before preparing food or beverages*
- before eating
- after outdoor play
- when hands are visibly soiled

* Children should not assist with food preparation.

- b. Keep soap available at all washing areas.
- c. Provide paper towels or air dryers for drying hands after handwashing. Cloth towels should not be shared.
- d. Caregivers should supervise and/or assist children with handwashing after toileting and before eating.
- e. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are a good supplement to washing hands and should be used often. They are **NOT** meant to replace washing hands with water and soap and may not be as effective as washing with water and soap when hands are visibly dirty or greasy.

2. Diapering

- a. Designate a diaper-changing station away from food preparation and play areas. Ideally, this station has a non-porous surface and is within easy access of a hands-free, lined and covered trash bin, and a handwashing station.
- b. Each diapered child should have an individual supply of diaper wipes and diaper cream.
- c. Make sure children are wearing the proper size diaper; diapers must be covered with clothing.
- d. Dispose of soiled diapers in hands-free, closed-lid containers
- e. Disinfect diaper changing areas after each use with bactericidal wipes.
- f. Caregivers responsible for diapering and toileting should **not** participate in food and bottle preparation

3. Toileting

- a. **Directly Supervise** (observe/assist) children to make sure that after using the bathroom they wipe themselves properly (and the toilet seat is clean), close the toilet lid before flushing, and immediately wash their hands with water and soap for 20 seconds and dry them on paper towels. Caregivers should also wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds after assisting children with toileting.
- b. Flush toilets are preferable to portable potty chairs in group care settings. However, if portable potty chairs must be used, they should be kept in a designated area away from play and dining areas and should be cleaned and disinfected after each use. The water used to clean potty chairs should be emptied into the toilet.
- c. If children soil their clothing with stool or urine, the clothing should be removed, sealed in a plastic bag to be taken home. Care-givers should not rinse or wash the soiled clothing.

4. Environmental Cleaning

- a. Clean and sanitize toys and other objects frequently handled by children on a daily basis or whenever they become visibly soiled. Disposable cloths/towels are preferred for cleaning of these items.
- b. Cloth toys may be washed and heat-dried for 30 minutes on the highest clothes dryer heat setting
- c. *Shigella* can be cleaned with routine disinfectants such as diluted household bleach, Lysol or bactericidal wipes. Check the label to see how long you need to leave the sanitizer or disinfectant in contact with the surface you are treating, whether you need to rinse it off before contact by children, and for any precautions when handling.