



**NORTHERN KENTUCKY  
INDEPENDENT DISTRICT  
HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

## Shigella (Shigellosis)

What is Shigella?	Shigella is a bacteria (germ) that infects the bowels. The Shigella bacteria causes an illness called Shigellosis, which most often occurs in young children.
What are the symptoms of Shigellosis?	<p>The symptoms of Shigellosis include: diarrhea (may be watery), fever, stomach cramps, nausea or vomiting. The stools of a person with Shigellosis may contain blood or mucus.</p> <p>Symptoms of Shigellosis typically last between four and seven days. Persons with Shigellosis, however, can show mild or no symptoms when infected.</p>
How is Shigellosis spread?	<p>Shigellosis is spread through contact with the stool of an infected person, and then placing your hands, food or another object contaminated with the bacteria in your mouth.</p> <p>A person with Shigellosis can spread the bacteria even if he/she does not have symptoms, and is contagious as long as the Shigella bacteria is present in the stool, which can be up to four weeks after the onset of the illness.</p> <p>A person with Shigellosis is considered contagious until a negative stool culture has been obtained at least 48 hours after the person has finished taking a round of antibiotics.</p> <p>Children with Shigella may be asked to stay home from school or child care until symptoms have resolved and a stool culture at least 48 hours after antibiotic treatment is completed is negative; or until symptoms have resolved and a stool culture is negative if no antibiotics are used.</p> <p>Another way that Shigella can be spread, particularly during the summer months, is by exposure through swimming pools and spas. Anyone who has experienced diarrhea recently should not be using your pool or spa until completely well, as individuals can be contagious for several weeks after symptoms have subsided.</p> <p>If someone infected with Shigella has an accident in the pool, the bacteria can infect others if exposure occurs before the bacteria are killed by the chemicals in the pool. This happens either by getting bacteria on the hands and then putting the hands in your mouth or swallowing infected pool water.</p> <p>Young children are of special concern because of the increased number of Shigella cases associated with child care centers. In addition, young children are more prone to having fecal accidents in the pool and tend to have inadequate hygiene habits. Furthermore, the use of plastic diaper pants or diapers designed for use in water, commonly called “swimmies”, cannot guarantee that some fecal matter will not escape into the pool water.</p>

<p>How can I keep from getting Shigellosis?</p>	<p>To keep from getting Shigellosis, you should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and running water after using the restroom, after changing diapers, and before preparing or eating food. This is the best way to prevent the spread of infectious diseases found in the intestinal tract, such as Shigellosis.</li> <li>• Do not use wading pools for groups of children, because Shigellosis is transferred easily in standing water.</li> <li>• Dispose of soiled diapers properly.</li> </ul> <p>If you have diarrhea, stay home from work, school or day care until you are better. Also, do not prepare food for others while you have diarrhea. <b>Do not go swimming in a public pool for at least two weeks.</b> You may also want to contact your doctor for testing.</p> <p>For information on sanitizing go to: <a href="http://www.nkyhealth.org/sanitize">www.nkyhealth.org/sanitize</a></p>
<p>If I've been exposed to Shigella, how long will it take for symptoms to develop?</p>	<p>The initial symptoms of Shigellosis can occur between one and seven days (usually one to three) after exposure.</p>
<p>What treatments are available for Shigellosis? How serious is the disease?</p>	<p>Your doctor may also prescribe an antibiotic.</p> <p>Medicines that reduce diarrhea by slowing down bowel activity, such as Imodium AD or Lomotil, may make matters worse.</p> <p>In some cases, severe diarrhea may require hospitalization to avoid dehydration. In children less than 2 years old, Shigellosis has been found to cause a high fever and seizures.</p>
<p>How many cases of Shigella have been reported in Northern Kentucky? Nationally?</p>	<p>In 2011, Northern Kentucky experienced an outbreak of Shigella with 147 cases reported. In typical year, an average of 25 cases are reported.</p> <p>Every year, about 18,000 cases of Shigellosis are reported in the United States. Because many milder cases are not diagnosed or reported, the actual number of infections may be 20 times greater.</p> <p>Shigellosis is particularly common and causes recurrent problems in settings where hygiene is poor and can sometimes sweep through entire communities. Shigellosis is more common in summer than winter.</p> <p>Children, especially toddlers aged 2 to 4, are the most likely to get Shigellosis. In Northern Kentucky, many cases are related to the spread of the illness in child-care settings, and many more are the result of the spread of the illness in families with small children.</p>
<p>Where can I get more information on Shigellosis?</p>	<p>For more information online, you can visit the Centers for Disease Control at <a href="http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/shigellosis/">http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/shigellosis/</a>.</p> <p>Or, for more information on the Health Department's programs, please call 859.363.2070.</p>

Created: 6/12/07, Updated: 4/18/13

Sources: Northern Kentucky Health Department Epidemiology; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[www.nkyhealth.org](http://www.nkyhealth.org)