



## FACT SHEET

### Shigellosis (*Shigella* infection)

#### What is it?

- Shigellosis is an infection of the intestines caused by a group of bacteria called *Shigella*.
- *Shigella* can cause severe infections requiring hospitalization in young children and elderly persons.

#### What are the symptoms?

- Illness usually begins 1 to 4 days after swallowing the bacteria and may last 4 to 7 days.
- Sometimes people have few or no symptoms.
- Symptoms include:
  - Diarrhea (may be watery or bloody)
  - Fever
  - Stomach cramps
  - Nausea or vomiting
  - Severe cases may cause dehydration (loss of fluids) or convulsions (in young children).

#### How is it spread?

- *Shigella* are present in the stool (bowel movements) of ill persons and for a week or two after recovery.
- *Shigella* spread when hands, food, water or objects (toys, pens, etc.) become contaminated with the stool of an infected person and then into someone else's mouth (for example when an infected person does not wash hands well after using the bathroom).
- The amount of contamination needed to spread the infection is microscopic (too small to see or smell).
- The bacteria can be spread by infected people even if they do not have symptoms.
- Flies can spread *shigella* when they have contact with infected stool and then contaminate drinking water or food.

#### Diagnosis and Treatment

- *Shigella* infection is identified from a stool culture test.
- In some cases, antibiotics can be prescribed to shorten both the duration of illness and the length of time bacteria is passed in the stool.
- Persons with milder illness recover without antibiotic treatment.
- Anti-diarrhea medications should not be used to treat *Shigella* infection and can make the illness worse.

#### Prevention

- Shigellosis can be prevented by washing hands carefully with soap and warm water each time you use the bathroom, after changing diapers, and before preparing food or eating.
- Children who are not completely toilet-trained in day care centers or in homes should wash hands frequently with adult supervision.
- People who have shigellosis should not prepare food or pour water for others until they are better and have been told it is safe by their health care provider or by Public Health.
- When possible, young children with *Shigella* infection who are still in diapers should not be in contact with uninfected children.
- Pay special attention to the proper disposal of soiled diapers and other human waste.
- Keep kitchen work surfaces clean.
- Children and adults with diarrhea should not use public swimming areas until they are better.

**Report all cases to El Paso Department of Public Health by calling 915-771-5810**