



## Mecklenburg County Health Department

# Shigellosis

*Shigella* is a bacterial microorganism commonly found in the stools of infected humans. The symptoms are fever, abdominal cramps, and diarrhea (sometimes bloody) that generally starts 1 to 7 days after exposure. The diarrhea from the illness usually lasts about 4 to 7 days and may be bloody. *Shigella* enters the body through the mouth.

Children can catch this infection by putting objects contaminated with an infected person's stool, such as toys or fingers, in their mouths or by eating or drinking contaminated food or water. Outbreaks can occur in daycare rooms with diapered children. Treatment with antibiotics can shorten the disease, but is not always necessary. Some people become carriers and remain contagious for weeks.

To prevent *Shigella* infection:

1. Wash hands thoroughly before contact with any food or food preparation utensil such as spoons, plates, single-service items, etc.
2. Cook food thoroughly.
3. Refrigerate leftovers promptly.
4. Avoid spreading germs from one food to another by washing and sanitizing knives, cutting surfaces, and plates after contact with uncooked foods such as meat, poultry, or raw eggs.
5. Prevent children from sharing cups, foods, etc. during feeding times.
6. Wash your and children's hands before touching food or ice.
7. Wash your and children's hands after using the bathroom, changing diapers, swimming, or playing outside.
8. Avoid contact with outside surface waters like creeks, streams, ponds, lakes, etc. If contact is made, wash hands thoroughly after contact.
9. **Always wash hands with soap and water.**

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