
Understanding Shigellosis Food Poisoning

Shigellosis is a digestive illness caused by a bacterial infection.

How to say it

shih-geh-LO-sis

What causes shigellosis food poisoning?

Shigellosis is caused by the bacteria called *Shigella*. It's more common in young children. You can get it through contact with the stool of an infected person. You can get it from eating food or drinking water contaminated with the bacteria. Contaminated raw fruits and vegetables are the most common food source. Fruits and vegetables can become contaminated from infected food handlers or in the growing fields. Or an infected person who handles food can spread the bacteria. You can also get shigellosis if you:

- Touch a contaminated surface and get the bacteria in your mouth
- Swim in and swallow contaminated water, such as at a community pool, and get the bacteria in your mouth

What are the symptoms of shigellosis food poisoning?

Symptoms usually start about 1 to 3 days after you are exposed to the bacteria. But you may have no symptoms for up to a week. The infection may be more severe in children and older adults. The symptoms typically last a few days. They include:

- Fever
- Stomach pain or cramping
- Watery diarrhea
- Bloody diarrhea in severe cases
- A painful urge to use the bathroom

More severe symptoms are possible, but they are rare. Severe symptoms include seizures, a hole or tear in the intestine, and even death.

Shigella germs can be found in your stool for up to 3 weeks after diarrhea stops. Because of this, don't have sex with your partner (anal, oral, or vaginal) for at least 1 week after diarrhea stops. Always use safe-sex practices.

How is shigellosis food poisoning treated?

There is no vaccine to prevent shigellosis. Most people with the illness get better within 7 days. Treatments include:

- **Rest.** You may feel better faster if you get plenty of rest.

-
- **Fluids.** Drinking lots of fluids will help you stay hydrated. Don't drink alcohol or beverages with caffeine.
 - **Medicine.** In severe cases, your healthcare provider may prescribe antibiotics. But most people get better without them. Medicines to slow or stop the diarrhea are generally not given.

When should I call my healthcare provider?

Call your healthcare provider right away if any of the following occur:

- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as directed by your healthcare provider
- Pain that gets worse
- Symptoms that don't get better, or get worse
- New symptoms