

WHAT IS SHIGELLA?



Shigellosis or Dysentery as it is sometimes known, is an infection of the bowel caused by group of bacteria called Shigella.

How did I get it?

- Shigella is primarily a human disease and can be easily passed from one person to another if the infected person fails to wash their hands properly.
- It can be easily transferred by infected food handlers whose hygiene is poor.
- It is common amongst young children and is a common cause of diarrhoea in people returning from travel to developing Countries.
- It is often acquired by drinking water contaminated with human faeces or by eating food washed with contaminated water.

When did I get it?

The illness usually occurs within 1-7 days after exposure.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- The usual symptoms include diarrhoea, nausea, and fever.
- The diarrhoea typically contains blood and mucous or may be very watery.
- Occasionally patients suffer from vomiting, straining and stomach cramps.
- Children may sometimes get convulsions.

How do I stop it spreading?

- Wash hands thoroughly after going to the toilet and before preparing meals or eating
- Young children with the infection should have their hands washed for them or be supervised
- Disinfect all areas in the toilet daily (including door handles)
- Infected persons should stay away from work until vomiting and diarrhoea have ceased
- If the infected person is a food handler, works as a health carer / nurse or is a child attending school or a nursery etc. further advice should be obtained.

- Read the accompanying leaflet for further guidance.

Where can I get more advice?

- Your own General Medical Practitioner or a health specialist will be able to advise upon individual patient health care.
- You should inform your place of work or in the case of children, the head teacher of the school to find out if exclusion is necessary and when you can return.
- The investigating officer will also provide you with a more general leaflet on infection control and may be contacted on the number below for further advice if it is required.



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