



**For further information
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Shigella

Patient information leaflet



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towels. Wash the laundry of an infected person on the hottest setting possible.

Avoid swimming pools, jacuzzis, hot tubs or spas until diarrhoea has ceased for 2 weeks to prevent spreading infection to other swimmers.

Avoid sex, until a week after symptoms stop.

Wash salad items and other food (fruit and vegetables) to be eaten raw.

Avoid drinking tap water in countries with poor sanitation systems or that are known to carry waterborne infections. Avoid ice cubes and salad and vegetables that have been washed in local tap water as well.

Will I need treatment?

If you have diarrhoea and vomiting, it is very important to drink plenty of fluids to replace those lost and stop you getting dehydrated. Water, fruit juice and isotonic (sports) drinks that replace salts and minerals are best. Since most cases of shigella infection are short-lived, antibiotics are only used if the infection doesn't clear up on its own.

When can I return to work?

To reduce the risk of spreading infection, you should not return to work until the diarrhoea has stopped for 48 hours. Depending on the particular type of shigella you have and your age and occupation, you may not be allowed to return to nursery, school or work until you have provided 2 negative faecal (poo) samples. Your environmental health officer and the Public Health Protection Unit (see below) will advise you.

How can I prevent the spread of infection?

Wash your hands after using the toilet and regularly throughout the day and:

After :

- ◆ Coming into contact with a person with shigella infection

- ◆ Changing nappies
- ◆ Handling raw food
- ◆ Handling pets

Before:

- ◆ Food handling and cooking
- ◆ Eating
- ◆ Feeding young children or the elderly

Avoid sharing towels and facecloths with someone who has shigella as the bacterium can survive outside the body on damp surfaces, e.g.

What is Shigella?

Shigella is a bacterium that causes a very infectious illness called dysentery or shigellosis. The four species of bacteria causing shigellosis are: *Shigella sonnei* (this is the most common cause of dysentery in the UK), *Shigella flexneri*, *Shigella dysenteriae* and *Shigella boydii*.

How do you catch it?

Shigella is found in the gastrointestinal tract (bowel) and faeces (poo) of infected people and is easily spread from person to person (especially young children) by poor hygiene. Only a tiny amount needs to get into your mouth to get infected (e.g. via your fingers). Occasionally it is spread by food and water that has been contaminated by people carrying the disease. It can also occur through sexual contact with a person who has the infection.

What are the symptoms of shigella?

Symptoms usually begin within 1 - 3 days of becoming infected, can last from 3 - 7 days and can include:

- ◆ Diarrhoea, sometimes bloody
- ◆ Nausea and vomiting
- ◆ Abdominal pain
- ◆ Fever