

Shigellosis

Shigellosis is an infection caused by the bacteria *Shigella*. The bacteria are found in the stool and are easily passed between people when tiny bits of infected stool get in the mouth.

Causes

Shigellosis is passed through contact with infected stool. It can be sexually transmitted by:

- oral-anal contact (rimming)
- getting stool on your fingers and then touching your mouth
- putting objects that have stool on them into your mouth (such as sex toys)

Symptoms

Symptoms of shigellosis include diarrhea, sometimes with blood and mucous, fever, stomach cramps, rectal pain, nausea and vomiting. If you do get symptoms, they will most likely show up 3 days after contact, and most people get better within 5 to 7 days without treatment.

Tests and Diagnosis

Testing for shigellosis is usually done with a stool sample. It is best to get tested for shigellosis if you have symptoms.

Treatment

Shigellosis can be treated with prescription antibiotics. It is important to take all your medication as directed. It is also important to not have oral-anal sex (even with a condom) for 7 days after starting treatment. If you do, you could pass shigellosis to your partner.

People with shigellosis who care for children, the elderly, or people who are ill should not go to work until the infection is cleared. Also, people who handle or prepare food should stay home until the infection is cleared.

Complications

Talk to a doctor if you have fever, severe stomach pains or bloody diarrhea. If you have diarrhea, drink lots of fluids to avoid dehydration. On rare occasions, a person may need to be hospitalized if the diarrhea is severe enough. Blood poisoning is another rare complication.

Prevention

It is a good idea to be tested regularly for STIs, especially if you have new sexual partners or open relationships. Talking with partners about safer sex makes sure everyone knows what to expect. Condoms are great if they work for you – the correct use of condoms reduces your chances of getting and passing shigellosis.

- Use protection, such as a dental dams or condoms, for sex that involves oral-anal contact (rimming) and use latex gloves for penetration of the anus with fingers
- Use condoms on sex toys that are shared with others
- When handling the dental dam or removing the glove, do not touch the area that has been in contact with the anus
- Wash your hands, other body parts, and any sex toys that may have touched stool
- Wash your hands with soap and warm water after having a bowel movement and before preparing foods or drinks

Resources

HealthLink BC – Information about Shigellosis in multiple languages

<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/shigellosis>

SmartSexResource – If you are worried or have anxiety about Shigellosis

<https://smartsexresource.com/topics/worry-and-anxiety>

TransCareBC – Gender-affirming sexual and reproductive health information

<http://www.phsa.ca/transcarebc/care-support/access-care/sexual-hlth>