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| Shigellosis |
| Information for contacts |
| OFFICIAL |

# What is shigellosis?

Shigellosis is a bowel infection caused by *Shigella* bacteria. It is typically self-limiting but is highly contagious and can be potentially serious.

# What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of shigellosis include diarrhoea, fever, nausea, vomiting and abdominal cramps. Stools typically contain blood, mucus, or pus but some people only experience watery diarrhoea. Symptoms usually develop one to three days following exposure but can occur from 12 hours to 7 days in some cases.

# How is it spread?

Shigellosis is highly contagious and is mainly spread through the faecal-oral route, including during sexual contact. People with shigellosis can spread infection while the *Shigella* bacteria continue to be shed in the stools. This can last for up to four weeks after symptoms resolve.

# Who is at risk?

Shigellosis can affect anyone. Returned travellers and men who have sex with men are at higher risk of contracting shigellosis, including antibiotic resistant infections. Young children are also at higher risk of contracting shigellosis.

Young children, older people and those who are immunocompromised are at higher risk of developing severe illness.

# What is the treatment?

Most people with shigellosis only need supportive treatment with plenty of fluids. Avoid anti-vomiting or anti-diarrhoea medications as these may prolong illness. Some people with severe infection or those working in certain occupations where there is high risk of spreading infection to others may require antibiotic treatment.

# What are antibiotic resistant infections?

Some infections are caused by antibiotic resistant strains of *Shigella* bacteria which limit treatment options for those requiring antibiotic treatment and can be spread from person-to-person. It is very important to limit the spread of infections caused by resistant *Shigella* bacteria in our community.

People who have been exposed to these infections may be contacted by their Local Public Health Unit if:

* Living in the same household with someone with shigellosis
* Having had sexual contact with someone with shigellosis

# What should contacts of shigellosis do?

For seven days from the last time of being exposed to someone with shigellosis, contacts should monitor for symptoms as listed above.

If you are well, then you do not need to do anything.

If you develop symptoms:

* Seek medical care get tested
* Drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration
* While symptomatic and for 48 hours after diarrhoea has resolved:
  + Wash hands thoroughly with soap and hot water, especially after going to the toilet, changing nappies, and before preparing or eating food
  + Do not prepare food for others
  + Regularly clean kitchen and bathroom surfaces
  + Do not share linen and towels with others
  + Do not have sex
  + Do not attend childcare, school, or work
* If you test positive for shigellosis your Local Public Health Unit will provide further advice. If you work in certain occupations (for example childcare, healthcare, and residential facilities) you may need clearance to return to work.

# Where to get help

* Your [GP (doctor)](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/serviceprofiles/general-practitioner-services)
* [Pharmacist](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/serviceprofiles/Pharmacist)
* Your local community health service
* [Melbourne Sexual Health Centre](https://www.mshc.org.au/) Tel. [(03) 9341 6200](tel:0393416200) or [1800 032 017](1800%20032%20017) or TTY (for the hearing impaired) [(03) 9347 8619]((03)%209347%208619)
* [Thorne Harbour Health](https://thorneharbour.org/) (formerly Victoria AIDS council) Tel. [(03) 9865 6700](tel:0398656700) or [1800 134 840](1800%20134%20840)
* [Sexual Health Victoria (SHV)](https://shvic.org.au/our-reproductive-and-sexual-health-clinics). To book an appointment call SHV Melbourne CBD Clinic: [(03) 9660 4700](tel:0396604700) or call SHC Box Hill Clinic: [(03) 9257 0100](tel:0392570100) or (free call): [1800 013 952](tel:1800013952). These services are youth friendly.
* [The Centre Clinic](https://vac.org.au/lgbti-health/centre-clinic), St Kilda Tel. [(03) 9525 5866](tel:0395255866)

# More information

For more information, please visit the Better Health webpage on [Gastroenteritis - shigellosis](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/gastroenteritis-shigella) or contact your [Local Public Health Unit](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/local-public-health-units).

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