

Shigellosis

Definition:

Shigellosis is caused by *Shigella* bacteria.

Signs and symptoms:

Symptoms of shigellosis include bloody or watery diarrhea and stomach cramps starting a day or two after exposure to the bacteria. Symptoms resolve in 5-7 days. A severe infection with high fever may be associated with seizures in children less than 2 years old. It can be several months before bowel habits return to normal.

Transmission:

Shigella bacteria are present in stool of sick (or asymptomatic) individuals for up to 2 weeks after illness. Most infections are the result of passing the bacteria from stools or soiled fingers to the mouth of another person. Family members and close contacts of cases (especially playmates of children) are most at risk of becoming infected. Shigellosis can also be acquired from eating contaminated food or consuming contaminated water (such as lakes, splash tables, pools).

Diagnosis:

Shigellosis is diagnosed by clinical symptoms and laboratory tests. Laboratory tests include testing of stool, blood, or other sterile body fluid for the presence of *Shigella*.

Role of the School Nurse:

Prevention

- Provide education to students and staff regarding good hand washing with soap and water
- Promote proper hand washing after using the toilet, changing diapers or assisting children with the toilet or preparing/touching food
- Dispose of diapers appropriately
- Avoid swallowing water when swimming or playing in lakes, ponds, streams, swimming pools and backyard “kiddie” pools
- Exclude symptomatic students and staff from school and school trips, especially involving swimming
- Provide education on good food safety practices
- Promote washing of fruits and vegetables

Treatment Recommendations

- If symptoms are noted, the child should be referred to their primary care provider for treatment
- Non-specific supportive therapy, including hydration, is important
- Antibiotics may be used and can shorten the duration of illness; however antibiotic susceptibility testing should be completed before antibiotics are prescribed due to an increase in antibiotic resistance
- Antidiarrheal agents make the illness worse and should be avoided

Exclusions

- Students or staff should be excluded from school while symptomatic with diarrhea
- In a daycare setting, children should be excluded until 24 hours or more after diarrhea resolves
- Educational modifications may be warranted in children with a positive diagnosis
- See Maine Food Code for exclusions for staff handling food

Reporting Requirements

- Shigellosis is a reportable disease – report to Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821

Resources:

- Maine CDC website (including fact sheet) <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/disease/shigellosis.shtml>
- Maine Food Code: <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/environmental-health/el/rules.htm>
- DOE Child Nutrition Services <http://www.maine.gov/education/sfs/index.html>
- Federal CDC website <http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/shigellosis/>
- Federal CDC healthy swimming website <http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/>