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SHIGELLA

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

What is Shigella?

Shigella is an infection usually characterized by fever, diarrhea, stomach cramps and bloody stools.

How Can You Be Exposed to Shigella?

Shigella can pass from one person to another. Most infections come from eating contaminated foods. Foods can become contaminated by infected food handlers who do not wash their hands with soap and water after using the bathroom. Vegetables can become infected if they are harvested from a field with sewage in it. Also, flies can infect food as well.

What Are The Symptoms of Shigella?

Symptoms of Shigella include diarrhea, fever, and stomach cramps usually starting 1-2 days after becoming infected with the bacteria. The diarrhea is often bloody. A severe infection can lead to dehydration and high fevers that can lead to seizures in children under 2 years of age. Some people who are infected may have no symptoms at all and still pass the bacteria along.

How Can a Shigella Infection Be Diagnosed?

Determining that Shigella is the cause of an illness depends on laboratory tests that identify the Shigella bacteria in the stools of infected persons. These tests are sometimes not performed unless the lab has been specifically instructed to do so.

How Can Shigella Be Treated?

Shigella can usually be treated with antibiotics. Appropriate treatment usually kills the bacteria that might be present in the patient's stools and shortens the illness. Persons with mild infections usually recover from the illness with no antibiotic treatment. Unfortunately, some Shigella strains have become resistant to antibiotics and the continuation of antibiotic treatment could result in more resistant strains.

Are There Any Long-Term Consequences of Shigella?

Persons with diarrhea usually recover completely, although it may take several months. About 3% of persons who are infected with one type of Shigella will later develop pain in their joints, eye irritation, and painful urination. Once a person has had a specific type of Shigella, they are not likely to become infected with that same strain for at least several years.

For more information on Shigella, please visit the Center's for Disease Control website at www.cdc.gov or call District Health Department No. 2 at 1-800-504-2650.

DHD2 Shigella Fact Sheet

RCP-P06j-00 - Information taken from the Center's for Disease Control website at www.cdc.gov and will need to be reviewed to ensure accuracy before dissemination.