

# Shigellosis

## What is shigellosis?

Shigella is a germ that causes an infectious disease (also called “shigellosis” or “dysentery”) of the bowel which can be especially dangerous for the very young and older people. The germ can spread from an infected person to contaminate water or food, or directly to another person.

The illness is most commonly seen in day-care and schools and is a cause of traveller’s diarrhoea caught from contaminated food and water in developing countries.

## How do you catch shigellosis?

- From eating food or drinking water infected by shigella.
- From the stools of people infected by shigella, including children and babies.
- Flies can pass on shigella from human faeces to uncovered food.

## How can I prevent getting infected?

Wash hands with soapy water for 20 seconds, then dry well with a clean cloth or paper towel every time:

- after going to the toilet
- before preparing food, eating or drinking
- after changing babies nappies

People travelling to countries where shigella is common should also:

- not drink unsafe water, including ice and drinks mixed with water
- drink bottle and boiled water
- not eat from street stalls
- ensure hot food is well cooked and eaten while still hot

**Tip:** for helpful information for New Zealanders travelling to other countries visit

[www.safetravel.govt.nz](http://www.safetravel.govt.nz)

## How do you know for sure you have shigellosis?

You may feel or get:

- diarrhoea
- upset stomach and vomiting
- sometimes blood in the faeces

Symptoms will start between 1 to 7 days (usually 1 to 3 days) after being infected and can last for 4 to 7 days.

### What should I do if I think I have shigellosis?

- Visit your doctor
- explain what your symptoms are
- if your doctor thinks you have shigellosis they will ask for a faeces sample and this will confirm whether you have shigellosis or not.

### What more can I do to prevent shigellosis?

- Wash hands with soapy water for 20 seconds, then dry well with a clean cloth or paper towel every time:
  - after going to the toilet
  - before preparing food, eating or drinking
  - before and after changing babies nappies or holding a baby
- Do not share food, drinks and spoons or straws.
- Anyone who has diarrhoea should not use a pool or swim in a pond while sick – be extra careful with small children even if they are in nappies.

### When can I go back to work, school or daycare?

- Anyone with diarrhoea, even if the reason is not known, should not go to work, school or daycare until they have been free of symptoms for 2 days.
- Children should stay away from daycare or school until tests show they are free of the bacteria
- Adults, whose job involves preparing food, working at a daycare centre or in healthcare should not go back until two stool samples (taken more than 48 hours apart) show no signs of shigellosis.

**For general advice please contact Healthline on 0800 611 116**

**For further information contact the Auckland Regional Public Health Service on 09 623 4600**

*Last updated November 2018*