

Useful websites

www.sunderland.nhs.uk/chs

Remember - Some people who carry and excrete the bacteria have very few symptoms. With this in mind it is wise and good practice to always pay particular attention to handwashing.

- Always wash your hands with hot soapy water before preparing food.
- Keep your kitchen clean and dry - wash and dry utensils between preparation stages.
- Keep pets out of the kitchen. Wash hands after handling them.
- Take chilled or frozen food home as quickly as possible.
- Keep your fridge/freezer at the correct temperature - buy a fridge thermometer.
- Check dates on goods, use food within the recommended period.
- Store raw and cooked foods separately.
- Cook food thoroughly.
- Observe microwave standing times.

This information was correct at the time of printing. While the Trust makes every reasonable effort to keep its information leaflets up to date, very recent changes may not yet be reflected in the guidance and you should discuss this with the clinical staff at the time of your appointment.

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SHIGELLA

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET



Infection Prevention and Control Department

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What is Shigella?

Shigella is a worldwide acute bacterial disease, which causes outbreaks of diarrhoea. These outbreaks occur commonly in conditions where there is overcrowding e.g. institutions for children, geriatrics, mentally handicapped people and day care centres, crowded camps, kindergartens and schools.

Shigella bacteria causes an acute inflammatory colitis and bloody diarrhoea frequently accompanied by fever, nausea, vomiting, painful cramps and painful straining. In addition to blood the faeces may contain mucous and pus. Symptoms appear 12 to 96 hours after the ingestion of only very few bacteria from the faeces of an infected person. The only significant carrier of Shigella is man.

How is Shigella spread?

Shigella is spread by eating: -

- The bacteria from the faeces of an infected person or carrier.
- The consumption of food, water or milk that has been contaminated by faeces from an infected person or carrier.
- Sharing towels, face cloths, and bars of soap with an infected person or carrier. Therefore it is strongly advised that separate towels and face cloths be used. Bars of soap should be kept as dry as possible or liquid soap used.

The bacteria are known to multiply and survive in warm, moist areas e.g. lavatories, and may be spread by fomites (any article that has been in contact with infection and is capable of transmitting the same). Within a home it is possible for all the members of the family to be infected but the adults may have no symptoms.

It is imperative that strict attention is given to personal hygiene, in particular to hand washing after visiting the toilet and before preparing food. Hands should be washed with soap under running water for at least ten seconds using vigorous friction and covering all areas of the hands, then dried thoroughly.

What happens on admission to hospital?

On admission to hospital you may be admitted to a side-room in order to prevent the spread of infection. A nurse will need to know: -

- If you have been in contact with anyone with diarrhoea, vomiting etc.
- Your occupation - this is especially relevant if you are a food handler, health care worker, or attend any school, day centre or institution.

Following a Shigella infection an Environmental Health Officer will visit you. This will be either while you are in hospital or when you return home. He/she may request further faeces specimens from you and members of your household even though they have not been ill themselves.

The Environmental Health Officer will provide you with a container and spatula when visiting the toilet. To provide the specimen, first line the toilet bowl with toilet paper, then after using the toilet remove part of the faeces (with the spatula provided) and place it in the container provided.

What treatment will I need?

In some cases of Shigella severe dehydration may occur. This will require the replacement of body fluids by intravenous therapy. For uncomplicated cases medication is not generally indicated.