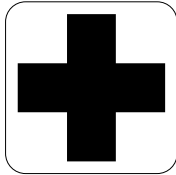


## WHAT IS SHIGELLA DYSENTERY?



Dysentery is an infectious illness which is most commonly caused by a bacteria called “Shigella”. The Shigella bacteria is found in the intestines of humans and can be passed from person to person.

Shigella dysentery can result in symptoms of diarrhoea, fever, nausea and blood and mucus in stools. Other symptoms can include vomiting and stomach cramps and the illness usually lasts between 4 and 7 days. Some further health complications can occur.

### How is it spread?

Shigella bacteria can be passed both from person to person and from man into sewage waste which can eventually infect food and water supplies.

In developed countries high standards of sanitation and clean water supplies mean that the risk of infection from Shigella is low. However, in countries where

sanitation is poor, there is a much higher risk of becoming infected with the Shigella bacteria. This is why many people become ill with diarrhoea and dysentery when travelling abroad to less developed countries.

To help control the spread of the disease it is vital that infected people wash very thoroughly, because it is easy to pass the bacteria to others.

Illness can be passed either directly from the infected person or transferred onto foods. For this reason it is important that caterers and food handlers are excluded from work until they are fully recovered and clear of all symptoms for a period of at least 48 hours. This should help to avoid spread through food from the infected person to members of the public.

Naturally, in families the illness can spread quickly. In this case it is essential that personal hygiene in the home is increased, especially in the kitchen and bathroom. See the advice given later in this leaflet for ways of protecting your family.

Some outbreaks of Shigella dysentery have occurred in places like day care centres, nurseries and schools. To help avoid this

happening, it is advisable to keep children and the elderly at home until they are fully recovered.

### What should I do? – if I suspect a case of Shigella dysentery in my family.

**Contact your doctor as soon as possible.** He/she will inform your local Environmental Health Unit for advice on controlling the infection. It is a legal requirement for your employer to exclude you from work if you pose a risk to other members of staff or the public. For this reason it is important that you inform your employer **immediately** if you are suffering from any symptoms of dysentery or even mild diarrhoea.

High risk occupations include:

- caterers, especially direct food handlers
- nursing/care staff
- those working with young children.

In the meantime, stay at home. Do not go to work and avoid visiting others if possible. Keep children away from school or nursery until clearance has been given by your employer, GP and Environmental Health Officer.

Dysentery can cause more serious illness in young children and the elderly, so it is essential that they get medical attention.

### **Tips when travelling**

Dysentery is common in many developing countries, such as parts of India and Africa, and also in some areas of southern Europe. If you are travelling to these areas, take the following precautions to prevent infection:

- Check drinking water is safe. If in any doubt buy sealed, bottled water or sterilise your drinking water by boiling or using sterilising tablets.
- Avoid ice cubes unless you are sure they are made from safe water.
- Take care with raw foods which may have been washed in local water. Wash and peel fruits, salads and raw vegetables.
- Stick to freshly cooked hot foods; raw shellfish, under-cooked dishes and cold meats can all be contaminated.
- Check that milk and dairy products are pasteurised.
- Personal hygiene is vital. Always wash your hands after using the toilet and before preparing or eating foods.

- Remember that recreational water, such as lakes can often be contaminated.

### **What steps can I take in the home to be safe?**

Once someone has become infected with Shigella dysentery the bacteria can be passed to other people very easily. This can occur either directly from the hands of the infected person, or indirectly through infected food, cups, toys etc.

- **Ensure all family members carry out regular hand washing to prevent spread of the infection**
  - *wash hands thoroughly with hot water and soap after using the toilet and before preparing or eating food.*
  - *provide separate towels for each person.*
  - *regularly clean and disinfect the toilet, basin, flush handle and taps.*
- **Prepare food safety**
  - *don't prepare food for other people if you have any sickness or diarrhoea*

- *regularly clean and disinfect food work surfaces, chopping boards and sinks.*

### **• Babies and young children**

- *wash hands thoroughly after handling nappies.*
- *clean the changing mat and potties with disinfection.*
- *keep your child away from nursery or school until they are fully recovered.*

*For information on dysentery or any other food poisoning, contact*

*Public Protection Department  
High Street  
Ruabon  
Wrexham  
LL14 6NH  
Tel:- 01978 292040*

