

# GET THE FACTS: Shigellosis

## Are You A Man Who Has Sex With Men?

Since August 2014, there has been an increase in gay and bisexual men diagnosed with Shigellosis – many of whom are HIV positive. In several cases the individuals had to be hospitalized. The Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) is working with The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to develop materials to educate local communities who are at risk. This fact sheet explains some basic information about the illness and what you can do to protect yourself.

### What is Shigellosis?

Shigellosis is a bacterial infection in your intestines. Symptoms include diarrhea (often bloody), fever and stomach cramps starting a day or two after exposure. Mild cases of shigellosis usually clear up in five to seven days. However, people with weakened immune systems including HIV-positive individuals are more likely to have severe symptoms, which may result in a prolonged illness and even hospitalization.

### How is it spread?

The bacteria that cause shigellosis are released in your stool. If someone is infected, their stool can still contain the bacteria up to two weeks after they are sick. Most infections are passed from one person's stool or soiled fingers to another person's mouth. The bacteria can spread when basic hygiene and hand washing habits are poor and/or during certain types of sexual activity, such as rimming (oral-anal contact) or from oral contact with contaminated skin, including skin around the buttocks, groin, testicles and penis.

### How is Shigellosis diagnosed and treated?

Shigellosis is diagnosed through testing a stool sample. Once an infection is diagnosed in adults, it is usually treated and cured with prescribed antibiotic pills for three to seven days.

If you have shigellosis or think you might, avoid sexual contact while symptomatic and for at least seven days after the symptoms clear. Individuals who are healthcare workers, food workers or who work in childcare settings should not work until they 1) have been treated with an antibiotic for at least 24 hours and gastrointestinal symptoms have stopped or 2) have had two negative stool samples collected at least 24 hours apart when off antibiotics for at least 48 hours.

### How do you prevent Shigellosis infection?

You can better protect yourself and others by following these steps:

- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water, particularly after using the restroom, after any sexual activity, after touching items used during sex and before food preparation.
- Clean sex toys before each use. Use a dental dam for rimming when having sex and use gloves for anal fisting and fingering.
- If you have symptoms, see your doctor for testing.
- If you are infected, avoid any sexual contact for at least seven days after you are symptom free and tell your sexual partners about their risk so they can get tested and treatment, if needed.

For more information visit [www.cityofchicago.org/health](http://www.cityofchicago.org/health) or contact the Chicago Department of Public Health at 312-746-5377.