



Sex-associated *Shigella* infection

People usually get *Shigella* by coming in contact with faeces (poo) of an infected person or contaminated food or water.

Shigella can be spread during sex and sexual activity with someone who has *Shigella*. This includes during direct sexual contact such as oral or anal sex (including rimming or fingering) or by indirect sexual contact such as touching contaminated objects such as sex toys or used condoms.

Signs and symptoms

Symptoms of a *Shigella* infection can include:

- diarrhoea (often with blood or mucous in it)
- stomach pains
- nausea and vomiting
- fever.

Symptoms usually start between one to three days after being exposed but can range from 12 hours to a week.

Symptoms usually last for four to seven days, but *Shigella* bacteria can continue to be shed in faeces (poo) for up to four weeks.

Who is at risk of sex-associated *Shigella* infection?

Anyone can get a *Shigella* infection; however, men who have sexual contact with other men are at higher risk of contracting a sex-associated *Shigella* infection, and infection due to multi-drug resistant (MDR) *Shigella*.

How to prevent getting sex-associated *Shigella*

- Avoid sexual activity with anyone that has diarrhoea or recently had diarrhoea.
- Washing your hands, genitals and anus with soap and water before and after sex or sexual activity.
- Washing your hands after touching sex toys, used condoms and douching materials.
- Using condoms or other barriers like dental dams or latex gloves during oral sex, oral-anal sex or anal fingering or fisting.
- Use condoms or other barriers with sex toys and wash the toys with soap and water before, after and between sex play.
- Using condoms every time you have anal and vaginal sex. This can also help prevent other sexually transmitted diseases.

Testing

Your doctor can arrange the testing of your stool (poo) to see if you have *Shigella*.

It's a good idea to talk to your doctor about being tested for other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis, hepatitis B and HIV, at the same time as you can have these infections and have no symptoms.

Treatment

Most people recover without needing treatment.

If you have *Shigella*:

- drink plenty of fluids such as plain water or oral rehydration drinks to avoid dehydration.
- avoid anti-vomiting or anti-diarrhoea medications unless prescribed or recommended by a doctor.

If the diarrhoea continues for more than a week or is causing dehydration or weight loss, you should see your doctor as antibiotic treatment may be required.

If you are diagnosed with a multi-drug resistant (MDR) *Shigella* infection, your doctor will speak to you about having the right antibiotics.

Infections can also be serious in some people who are at higher risk of severe illness including people who have weakened immune systems, for example, people with uncontrolled HIV infections or undergoing chemotherapy treatment for cancer.

Prevent the spread

Whilst you have the infection

- Wash your hands with soap and water often and thoroughly, especially after using the toilet and before eating or preparing food.
- Abstain from sex:
 - while symptomatic
 - for one week after symptoms have completely resolved.
- Don't prepare food or drink for others or share utensils until 48 hours after the diarrhoea has stopped.
- Don't share linen or towels.
- Avoid providing personal care for others until 48 hours after symptoms resolve.
- Don't swim in a pool until 48 hours after the diarrhoea has stopped.
- Don't go to work or school for at least 24 hours after the diarrhoea has finished, or 48 hours if you work in or attend healthcare, residential care, childcare, or prepare or handle food.

After symptoms resolve, for a further two weeks:

- use barrier protection (such as condoms and dams) during sex
- limit sexual activities with faecal-oral exposure, such as rimming
- shower and wash hands before and after sex.

Further information

For general information on *Shigella* infections, including in children or returned travellers:

www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/S_T/Shigella-infection-and-dysentery