



February 16, 2024

***Shigella* Advisory: Homeless Outreach, Shelter, Harm Reduction Provider and Administrators**

The Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless program is responding to reports of *Shigella* infections in Alameda County. These cases have been reported in persons experiencing homelessness, among people who use drugs and among residents of board & care facilities.

Key messages for services providers:

- **Frequent, thorough hand-washing by all, especially after bathroom and before eating**
- **Anyone with diarrhea should not perform any duties that involve cooking, handling of food contact surfaces or utensils, and working in the food preparation and food service**
- **Anyone with diarrhea should be directed to medical care promptly, and ask to be tested for *Shigella* as well as other common causes of diarrheal illness**

What is *Shigella*

Shigellosis (*Shigella*) is a diarrheal infection caused by *Shigella* bacteria, most commonly *S. sonnei* and *S. flexneri*. *Shigella* is **extremely contagious** – it is easily transmitted through person-to-person contact (poop-hands-mouth) and through contaminated food, water and other routes. Most *Shigella* infections are mild and treatable with antibiotics, but *Shigella* can be very serious and fast spreading, so it is critical to identify, prevent and control cases of this diarrheal disease.

How to Recognize Possible Cases

People with *Shigella* infection usually start experiencing symptoms 1 to 2 days after contact with the germ. *Shigella* symptoms include:

- Diarrhea that can be bloody or prolonged (lasting more than 3 days)
- Fever
- Stomach pain
- Feeling the need to pass stool (poop) even when the bowels are empty

Some people will not have any symptoms. Symptoms usually last 5 to 7 days.

How to Respond to Possible Cases

People with diarrhea should be urged to contact a doctor (primary care or Emergency Department) if they have any of these symptoms:

- Fever
- Bloody or prolonged diarrhea
- Severe stomach cramping or tenderness

- Dehydration

Shigella is a reportable disease, and the public health department works quickly to respond to reported cases. Please reach out to ACHCH with any concerns or questions. Suspected outbreak of diarrhea is reportable to public health and requires quick response to prevent spread of infection. Please contact ACHCH and ACPHD to report suspected outbreaks.

Diagnosis & Treatment

Diagnosis:

- *Shigella* is diagnosed through laboratory analysis of stool (poop) of an ill person. In a clinic, a patient with *Shigella* symptoms should receive lab blood, stool and susceptibility testing for diagnosis and treatment.

Treatment:

- Treatment includes oral antibiotics, which need to be taken exactly as directed. People who have shigellosis usually get better without antibiotic treatment in 5 to 7 days.
- Antibiotics can shorten the time you have fever and diarrhea by about 2 days. Ciprofloxacin and azithromycin are two recommended oral antibiotics.
- People with *Shigella* should drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration.
- Tell your healthcare provider if you have other medical conditions or a weakened immune system—for example, because of an HIV infection or chemotherapy treatment. If you have a weakened immune system, you may be more likely to become severely ill.

How to Report Cases/Outbreaks

Report suspected or confirmed cases of *Shigella* to Alameda County Public Health Department, especially if the case is known to reside or work in a congregate setting or is experiencing homelessness:

- Report by phone during business hours M-F 8:30-5PM at 510-267-3250 Option 2
- fax: 510-273-3744 or via secure email to AcuteCD@acgov.org.

Prevention & Universal Precautions

Staff of homeless shelter, outreach, food or services programs should carefully review their infection control procedures and be careful of the following:

- Food or drink that is prepared or handled by someone infected with *Shigella* can make other people sick.
- Food or services staff should tell managers when they are sick, stay home until diarrhea ends, and at work, wash hands frequently.

To mitigate risk of infection:

- Wash your hands with soap and water during key times:
 - Before preparing food and eating.
 - After changing a diaper or helping to clean another person who has defecated (pooped).
- Increase availability of handwashing sinks in homeless shelters and encampments or other locations where people experiencing homelessness spend time

- Increase accessibility of public restrooms in communities with large numbers of people experiencing homelessness
- Ensure that public restrooms and portable sanitation services are clean and well-maintained
- Distribute educational resources about personal and sexual hygiene in homeless sites or shelters
- Provide communication and preparedness resources promoting handwashing behavior change, food safety, and safe water practices
- Homeless services staff should make [flyers](#) and [information](#) available to staff and clients.
- Shelter, food, and services providers should review infection control processes

Resources and More Information:

- [Do You Have Diarrhea?](#)
- [Fact sheets](#)
- [Handwashing Posters](#)
- [Information for food service workers and managers](#)
- [ACHCH Communicable disease webpage](#)
- [Frequently asked questions](#)
- **ACHCH Regional Coordinators:** Homeless service providers can reach out to the following ACHCH Regional Coordinators as needed for consultation, questions, and issues related to concerns about communicable diseases such as Shigella among people experiencing homelessness:
 - **North County (Albany, Berkeley, Emeryville):** Andrea Zeppa; Phone: (510) 912-8610; Email: Andrea.Zeppa@acgov.org
 - **Oakland:** Lynette Ward; Phone: (510) 504-1298; Email: Lynette.Ward@acgov.org
 - **Mid County (Alameda, Hayward, San Leandro, Union City, Unincorporated):** Phil Clark; Phone: (510) 504-1294; Email: Phil.Clark@acgov.org
 - **South & East County** (Fremont, Newark, Livermore, Dublin, Pleasanton,) Hanna Toda; Phone: (510) 891-8943; Email: Hanna.Toda@acgov.org