Shigellosis - Frequently Asked Questions

What is Shigellosis?
An intestinal infection caused by the Shigella bacterium

What are the signs and symptoms?
- Fever
- Loose stools with blood or mucus
- Abdominal pain and cramps
- Possible convulsions in young children

How long after exposure does the illness appear?
The incubation period is 1 to 3 days; the range is 12 – 96 hours

How long is a person contagious after a Shigellosis infection?
The contagious period can last as long as 4 weeks if untreated. Antibiotics are effective in shortening the duration of diarrhea and eliminating the Shigella bacterium

How is Shigellosis spread?
Shigellosis is easily transmitted from person-to-person by fecal-oral route

Should a child or staff member with Shigellosis be removed from school?
- Children with diarrhea or vomiting should always be excluded from school while they are displaying symptoms. They can return when they are asymptomatic
- If children or staff members develop symptoms while at school, they should be sent home
- If Shigellosis is identified in a foodhandler at the school, he or she should be removed from work until two negative stool sample results are available

How can a school prevent and control Shigellosis and other diarrheal diseases?
- If a case is identified, the school should notify parents of children and staff who may have been exposed to the illness and encourage them to watch for symptoms
- The most important way to prevent illness is frequent handwashing. Post signs near sinks reminding staff and students to wash up and how to wash properly
- Encourage staff and students to wash hands after using the restroom, after assisting a child with toileting, before and after handling food, and before eating
- Practice sanitary food handling, including wearing gloves and removing anyone with diarrhea from food handling
- Carefully wash all fruits and vegetables. Cook foods to the appropriate temperatures. Minimize cross-contamination of foods by washing cutting boards / knives and other shared surfaces
- Bathrooms should be cleaned and disinfected frequently
- Tables and other contact surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected frequently

Need additional information on the prevention and control of diarrheal diseases? Call the Onondaga County Health Department Bureau of Communicable Disease at 435-3236

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