

# ***Shigella* infection (shigellosis)**

*Shigella* is a germ that can cause a severe bowel infection. It is a type of gastroenteritis (or 'gastro'). Symptoms include diarrhoea (sometimes containing blood or mucus), fever, vomiting and stomach cramps. Some infected people have no symptoms. Even very small numbers of the germs can cause an infection, so strict control measures are needed to stop it spreading.

## **How it spreads**

*Shigella* spreads from person to person when people swallow the germs. This can happen when:

- infected people do not wash their hands well after using the toilet and their hands contaminate food or surfaces
- people do not wash their hands well after changing the nappy of an infected baby and their hands contaminate food or surfaces.

## **Exclusion period**

Exclude until there has not been any diarrhoea or vomiting for at least 24 hours.

Staff members with these symptoms should not handle food until they have not vomited or had diarrhoea for at least 48 hours (they can be assigned to other duties after at least 24 hours, or stay away from the service).

Some states and territories may have different requirements for gastroenteritis (diarrhoea or vomiting). Check if your state or territory has different requirements for gastroenteritis.

## **Actions for educators and other staff**

Follow the exclusion period in the *Staying healthy* guidelines.

If you have 2 or more cases of gastroenteritis in your service, contact your local public health unit for advice. This is legally required in most states and territories (except South Australia).

Ensure staff and children have good hand hygiene.

Ensure staff use appropriate cleaning practices, as described in the *Staying healthy* guidelines.

## **Actions for parents and carers**

Keep your child at home until there has been no diarrhoea for at least 24 hours and they feel well.

Give your child plenty of fluids and talk to your pharmacist about rehydration solution options.

See a doctor immediately if your child cannot keep down any fluids. Babies under 6 months should always be seen by a doctor if they have gastro.

Encourage your child to wash their hands regularly.

## More information about *Shigella* infection

See healthdirect for more information on prevention, diagnosis and treatment of shigella infection ([healthdirect.gov.au/shigella-bowel-infection](http://healthdirect.gov.au/shigella-bowel-infection)).

To find out if a child needs medical help:

- use the online symptom checker ([healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker](http://healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker))
- speak to a registered nurse by calling the 24-hour health advice hotline on 1800 022 222.