

# Shigella Fact Sheet

## What is Shigella?

Shigella is closely related to Escherichia and is considered, by some scientists, to be another strain of E. coli. This group of bacteria found in the intestine of man and other animals.

This form of food poisoning is known as bacillary dysentery.

There are four pathogenic species of the bacteria:

- Shigella sonnei - a mild dysentery
- Shigella dysenteriae - severe dysentery
- Shigella flexneri
- Shigella boydii

If you have Dysentery you may be experiencing the following symptoms:

- Onset (hours: 12 hours to 2 days)
- Symptoms and duration of illness: Diarrhoea, fever, vomiting, abdominal pain. In severe cases blood and pus may be present in the faeces

## Foods incriminated

It is often spread from person to person via the faecal-oral route. Associated foods include salads (especially potato, sea food, meats or pasta) raw vegetables, milk, dairy products, poultry or contaminated water.

## Control measures

Good personal hygiene, control of flies, hygienic preparation of food and the use of potable water all help to prevent outbreaks of the disease. Mild forms of the disease (caused by Shigella sonnei) occur in the UK but it is more common in tropical countries where crowded populations that have poor personal hygiene and inadequate water and sewage systems exist.

Individuals primarily responsible for transmission are those who fail to clean their hands or under their fingernails thoroughly after defecation. They may then spread infection to others directly by physical contact or indirectly by contaminating food.

Dogs which have ingested infected human faeces, may be the source of infection in children

## Susceptible groups

Infants, the elderly, and the infirm are susceptible to the severest symptoms of disease, but all humans are susceptible to some degree. Shigellosis is very common by individuals with acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS)

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