



SCOTT COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
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News Release – For Immediate Use

Contact Person: Amy Cannady, Public Information Officer, 326-8618

Re: Scott County Health Department Reports Increase in Shigellosis, a Diarrheal Illnesses

The Scott County Health Department has received reports of an increase in the number of Shigellosis cases that have occurred in Eastern Iowa over the past few weeks. During May, there have been 22 cases reported in Scott County. Typically fewer than 5 cases are reported each month.

Shigellosis (bacterial dysentery) is an infection of the gut caused by the bacterium *Shigella*. *Shigella* is found in the stool (feces) of infected people. The main symptoms are diarrhea with cramps, often bloody. Shigellosis is very easily spread to others when the bacteria get on the hands of an infected person after they use the bathroom and fail to clean their hands appropriately. The bacteria are transferred from the sick person's hands to other people, and to food or drink that others will consume. When one person in a family gets sick it is very common for others to become ill because basic hand hygiene practices are widely disregarded.

If you have diarrhea you must stay home until diarrhea has been gone for 24 hours. Children with diarrhea must be excluded from school and childcare. Food handlers, healthcare providers and childcare workers with diarrhea must be excluded from work until two stool cultures have tested negative for the bacteria. People with diarrhea must also stay out of swimming pools.

Shigella can be passed on to others up to four (4) weeks after the diarrhea stops. To stop the spread to others, frequent handwashing is the most critical intervention. This includes cleaning under the finger nails where the bacteria can be hidden. Hands should be washed with soap and warm, running water for at least 15 seconds after using the toilet, changing a diaper, and before eating or preparing food. Infants and children must also have their hands washed frequently, as stated above. Alcohol-based hand (e.g. Purell and others) cleaners are also effective for *Shigella*.

Most people recover from Shigellosis without treatment. Antibiotics are useful only in very severe cases and their use probably increases the risk of severe complications. Anti-diarrheal medications like loperamide (Immodium) or diphenoxylate (e.g. Lomotil) are not recommended because they appear to make the illness last longer.

Anyone who develops severe diarrhea should contact their healthcare provider to be tested. *Shigellosis* is reportable to the Scott County Health Department which tracks the number of cases in order to take steps to control the spread of the illness.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call the Scott County Health Department at 563 326-8618, 8:00 a.m.-4:30pm Monday-Friday.