



County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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Public Health Division

PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY

To: Santa Cruz County Healthcare Providers
From: Gail Newel, MD, MPH, County Health Officer
Subject: Local Shigellosis Cases in Santa Cruz County; Test and Report Symptomatic Patients
Date: February 18, 2022

Situational Update:

Since mid-January 2022, four confirmed *Shigella flexneri* cases have been identified among residents of our county who are either experiencing homelessness themselves or who may have had contact with others experiencing homelessness. There have been additional reports of associated individuals treated for diarrheal disease within the past month without testing for Shigella. All providers should test and report any individual presenting with symptoms described below.

Shigellosis is a diarrheal illness caused by the highly infectious *Shigella* bacteria, and infected persons can **shed up to four weeks after illness**. Infections can be subclinical or self-limiting. **Typical symptoms last 5-7 days** and include watery or bloody **diarrhea, abdominal pain, fever, and malaise**.

Some infections **can be quite severe**, especially in young children, the elderly, and the immunocompromised. Severe symptoms can include dehydration, bacteremia, and seizures.

Most infections are transmitted person-to-person with a **very low infectious dose** via a **fecal-oral route** (e.g., poor handwashing, food preparation, contaminated water); sexual transmission is also known to occur.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Actions Requested of All Clinicians:

1. **SUSPECT** shigellosis in patients with compatible symptoms.
2. **TEST** by obtaining stool cultures and antimicrobial susceptibility testing. PCR testing does not replace stool culture. Resistance to ampicillin and trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole is common and has been confirmed in the recent cases, along with sensitivity to levofloxacin.
3. Test shigellosis patients for HIV and STDs (particularly syphilis) as co-infections are common. Substance use disorders may present as co-morbidities.
4. **TREAT** appropriately, based on the antimicrobial susceptibility profile of the individual isolate.
5. **REPORT** suspected and confirmed shigellosis cases to the Communicable Disease Unit:

- a. Call 831-454-4114 or submit a Confidential Morbidity Report (CMR) by faxing 831-454-5049 or via the CalREDIE Provider Portal.
 - b. It is especially important to report cases in sensitive occupations and situations (i.e. food handlers, direct care givers in health care facilities or group settings, or persons attending daycare, etc.). Cases in sensitive situations should be excluded from these settings while symptomatic and until Public Health restrictions are lifted.
6. **COUNSEL** patients on hand hygiene practices and avoiding activities while symptomatic that could pose a risk to others (e.g. food preparation for others, exposure to feces during sexual contact, recreational swimming, caring for small children, etc.).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Contact the Communicable Disease Unit at 831-454-4114 (Mon - Fri 8AM - 5PM) and 831-471-1170 (after hours and weekends).
 - Disease Reporting Information: www.santacruzhealth.org/CDUnit
 - Health Alerts: www.santacruzhealth.org/Alerts
- Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Shigellosis Treatment Guidance:
www.cdc.gov/shigella/audience-medical-professionals.html
- CDC Health Alert Network: Update – *CDC Recommendations for Managing and Reporting Shigella Infections with Possible Reduced Susceptibility to Ciprofloxacin* (2018):
<https://emergency.cdc.gov/han/han00411.asp>
- California Department of Public Health (CDPH):
www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Shigellosis.aspx
- CDPH Shigellosis Patient Fact Sheet:
www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/ShigellosisFactSheet.pdf
- CDC Shigellosis Health Education Patient Poster: www.cdc.gov/shigella/do-you-have-diarrhea.html



Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.