

**From:** Kansas City, Missouri Health Department (KCHD)  
**KCHD HAN Number:** KC047-09  
**Date:** December 24, 2009  
**Subject:** Increase in *Shigella* in Kansas City Metro Area



The Kansas City Metro area has seen an increase in the number of reported *Shigella* cases. Please be alert to adults and children who exhibit the following symptoms:

- Loose stools of small volume accompanied by nausea and fever
- Stools which contain blood and/or mucus
- Vomiting, stomach cramps and tenesmus
- Convulsions (most commonly found in young children)

*Shigella* is transmitted by direct or indirect fecal-oral contact with a symptomatic patient. *Shigella* may also be transmitted by ingesting contaminated food and water. It takes only 10-100 *Shigella* organisms to produce illness. The elderly, small children and the malnourished of any age are most susceptible to the disease and may have more severe illness.

The incubation period for *Shigella* ranges from 1-3 days but can also range from 12-96 hours. A person infected with *Shigella* is infectious from the time they begin having the acute illness until there is no presence of *Shigella* in the stool. Untreated, organisms can remain in the stool for 4 weeks or more. Patients treated with appropriate antimicrobials may have stool carriage of *Shigella* reduced to a few days.

*Shigella* can be detected through stool culture or rectal swab. It is important for *Shigella* specimens be processed quickly as *Shigella* remains viable outside the human body for only a short time.

When a patient is diagnosed with *Shigella* or any other foodborne illness, advise them to:

- Wash their hands frequently, thoroughly and correctly with soap and warm water. For smaller children, educate regarding proper hand washing techniques and supervise hand washing.
- Refrain from preparing food or drinks for others until they have been shown to no longer be carrying the *Shigella* bacterium.
- Dispose of diapers from infected children correctly. The diapers should be put in a closed-lid garbage can and wash his or her hands carefully with soap and water after changing or disposing of the diapers. Diaper changing areas should be disinfected with household bleach, Lysol or bactericidal wipes, according to directions.
- Practice basic food safety precautions. The treatment of regular drinking water prevents infections with *Shigella*.
- Keep children and adults with diarrhea out of swimming pools, saunas or spas and for 2 weeks following the end of diarrhea

Certain groups of people with *Shigella* require 2 successive negative stool cultures before returning to work or daycare. They include:

- Daycare employees
- Children who attend daycare
- Persons who work as food handlers
- Persons who provide health care

If you have confirmed cases of *Shigella* they should be reported to the Kansas City, MO Health Department (816-513-6152 or fax reports to 816-513-6316) or, if outside Kansas City, MO, *Shigella* cases should be reported to the Health Department in your local jurisdiction.