

Shigella causes severe diarrhoea and is often mistaken for food poisoning. It's caught from bacteria in faeces (poo) getting into your mouth during and after sex.

**GAY AND BISEXUAL MEN ARE PARTICULARLY AT RISK**

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

You will get diarrhoea lasting more than 48 hours (often with blood in it), normally with stomach cramps and fever. Symptoms usually start within four days of getting infected.



Public Health  
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**LGBT**  
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GOOD SESSION?  
BAD CASE OF DIARRHOEA?  
MAYBE IT'S...

**SHIGELLA**

## HOW IS SHIGELLA SPREAD?

**Very easily** - all it takes is for a tiny amount of bacteria to get into your mouth – by direct licking or via your fingers.

## HOW CAN I AVOID GETTING SHIGELLA FROM SEX?

- ▶ you can get Shigella by licking skin, condoms or toys which may have faeces (poo) on it – eg skin near the anus (rimming), buttocks, groin or penis (giving oral sex after anal sex)
- ▶ to lower your risk you can **wash your hands after sex** (and buttocks, groin and penis too if you can by taking a shower), especially if you're fingering or handling used condoms, sex toys or douching equipment
- ▶ change condoms between anal and oral sex
- ▶ use a barrier for rimming (such as a square of latex)
- ▶ use latex gloves for fingering or fisting

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I MIGHT HAVE IT?

Shigella infection is easily cured with antibiotics. Visit your doctor or a sexual health clinic to get tested, explaining you may have picked up a gut infection from sex, possibly Shigella. The doctor needs to know this so you get the right tests and treatment. A full sexual health check-up including an HIV test is a good idea.

Anyone with a bad case of diarrhoea should:

- ▶ drink fluids to stop losing too much water
- ▶ not go back to work until Shigella infection has been ruled out by a doctor, if work involves handling food or contact with patients

### Get tested – and if you have Shigella:

- ▶ wait for 48 hours after the symptoms stop before going back to work
- ▶ you cannot go back to work until given the all clear by a public health official if your work involves handling food or contact with patients

A person with Shigella can be infectious for up to a month. During that time if you have Shigella (or any severe diarrhoea):

### Wash your hands frequently!

Do this after using the toilet and before eating or preparing food. Use warm water and soap. Avoid preparing food for other people while you're ill or until a week after symptoms stop.

### And avoid:

- ▶ sex – until a week after symptoms stop
- ▶ sharing towels – use separate towels at home, and clean all taps, door handles, toilet handles, levers and seats with hot soapy water frequently
- ▶ spas/jacuzzis/hot tubs – you might contaminate the water and infect others

**FOR MORE INFORMATION  
VISIT [WWW.NHS.UK/SHIGELLA](http://WWW.NHS.UK/SHIGELLA)**