

**Interim Public Health Operational Guidelines for Shigellosis**

**Gateway number 201395**

**Appendices 8.1 and 8.2: Text of letters for shigellosis cases and contacts**

**Text of letter for shigellosis cases**

The Public Health England Health Protection Team (HPT) has been informed that you are suffering from bacterial dysentery (shigellosis). We are writing to provide you with some information about the illness and advice on how you can prevent the spread of the infection.

Shigellosis is caused by shigella bacteria that infect the gut, causing diarrhoea (often watery or slimy and sometimes bloody), fever, stomach cramps and sometimes vomiting. The illness may last for only a day or continue for one to two weeks. The incubation period (the time taken from coming into contact with the bug until the illness starts) is usually 1 to 3 days, but can be up to a week.

You are infectious to other people while you are ill and have symptoms. Handwashing is the most important way to stop the spread of infection. You can reduce your risk of passing on the infection by taking the following steps:

* Stay away from nursery, school or work until you’ve been symptom free for at least 48 hours.
* Where possible, stay away from other people until your symptoms have stopped.
* Wash your hands carefully with soap and warm water after using the toilet.
* Also wash your hands carefully before handling, eating or cooking food.
* Don’t prepare food for others until you’ve been symptom free for at least 48 hours.
* Avoid sharing towels.
* Avoid sexual contact until you have been symptom free for at least 48 hours.

As shigella is easily passed on to others, you may need to have a stool (poo) sample tested and be given the all clear before returning to work, school, nursery or a childminder. The type of shigella you have and whether or not you are in a risk group will influence how long you need to stay away. Risk groups are people in certain occupations, including healthcare workers and people who handle food, as well as people who need help with personal hygiene and very young children. The HPT or local Environmental Health Department will be able to advise you regarding this.

Further information can be found via the NHS Choices link: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/dysentery/Pages/Introduction.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dysentery/Pages/Introduction.aspx)

If you have any questions, please contact the HPT or local Environmental Health Department.

Yours sincerely

**Text of letter for (risk group) contacts of shigellosis cases**

The Public Health England Health Protection Team (HPT) has been informed that you are a close contact of a person with bacterial dysentery (shigellosis). We are writing to provide you with some information about the illness and advice on how you can avoid picking up the infection.

Shigellosis is caused by shigella bacteria that infect the gut, causing diarrhoea (often watery or slimy and sometimes bloody), fever, stomach cramps and sometimes vomiting. The illness may last for only a day or continue for one to two weeks. The incubation period (the time taken from coming into contact with the bug until the illness starts) is usually 1 to 3 days, but can be up to a week.

If you are well, then you do not need to do anything.

If you currently have or develop symptoms, please get medical attention and show this letter to your doctor. You may need to have a stool (poo) sample tested for the illness and be given the all clear to return to work, school, nursery or a childminder. The type of shigella you have and whether or not you are in a risk group will influence how long you need to stay away. Risk groups are people in certain occupations, including healthcare workers and people who handle food, as well as people who need help with personal hygiene and very young children. The HPT or local Environmental Health Department will be able to advise you regarding this.

You are infectious to other people while you are ill and have symptoms. Handwashing is the most important way to stop the spread of infection. You can reduce your risk of getting dysentery or passing on the infection by taking the following steps:

* Wash your hands carefully with soap and warm water after using the toilet.
* Also wash your hands carefully before handling, eating or cooking food.
* Be very careful with hand hygiene if you are taking care of others who are ill (such as helping with toileting or changing nappies).
* Avoid sharing towels.

If you currently have or develop symptoms:

* Stay away from nursery, school or work until you’ve been symptom free for at least 48 hours.
* Where possible, stay away from other people until your symptoms have stopped.
* Don’t prepare food for others until you’ve been symptom free for at least 48 hours.
* Avoid sexual contact until you have been symptom free for at least 48 hours.

Further information can be found via the NHS Choices link: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/dysentery/Pages/Introduction.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dysentery/Pages/Introduction.aspx)

If you have any questions, please contact the HPT or local Environmental Health Department.

Yours sincerely