

SHIGELLA:

WHAT CHILD CARE PROVIDERS NEED TO KNOW

An outbreak of shigellosis, a diarrhea illness caused by *Shigella* germs, was identified in Columbus last week in a child care center. This is the first large outbreak since the community shigellosis outbreak in 2012 and 2013 which affected 69 child care centers and 1,443 individuals.

During shigellosis outbreaks, most ill children and adults are linked to child care centers, because it spreads easily and is most common among 2 – 4 year olds who are not fully toilet-trained. Family members, child care providers and playmates are also at high risk of becoming sick and infecting others.

Shigella spreads from one person to the next through the stool (poop) of infected people. It most often spreads when someone does not wash his/her hands well after using the restroom, changing a diaper or helping a child with toileting.

Handwashing and careful diaper changing are key to preventing new infections, as well as staying out of child care settings until cleared by the local health department to return.

It may seem like just a case of diarrhea to some, but it can mean a hospitalization for a child, as well as an adult – a big deal to a family. The risk for serious complications goes up as more people are infected. Recovery and getting cleared to return to school or work also takes longer than other types of diarrheal illnesses, creating a hardship for child care centers and families who may need to take time off from work.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Diarrhea
- Fever
- Stomach Cramps
- Nausea or Vomiting
- Some people may have no symptoms, but can still spread the bacteria.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Wash hands with soap carefully and often, especially after going to the bathroom, after changing diapers and before preparing food or beverages.
- Supervise handwashing of toddlers and small children after they use the toilet.
- Dispose of soiled diapers in a closed lid can and disinfect diaper changing areas after each use.
- Keep children with diarrhea out of child care settings.
- Do not prepare food for others while ill with diarrhea.
- If you learn of symptoms among children and/or staff, encourage them to see their medical provider for further testing or diagnosis.

For more information, go to <http://publichealth.columbus.gov/preventshigella.aspx> or call 614 645-1474, option 2.

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