



FOODBORNE ILLNESS EDUCATION SERIES

SHIGELLA AND SHIGELLOSIS

Foodborne illness can be caused by numerous pathogens. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has designated *Shigella* species as one of the “Big Six” microorganisms that is highly infectious and can cause severe foodborne illnesses. *Shigella* outbreaks have been linked to both food handlers working while ill and contaminated foods. Foodservice establishments and retailers need to be aware of this microorganism and how to protect food from contamination.

TRANSMISSION, SYMPTOMS, AND STATISTICS

- The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates there are approximately 500,000 cases of shigellosis annually.
- *Shigella* is transmitted easily from person to person through the fecal-oral route. *Shigella* infection can be transmitted through any foods touched by an infected food handler who prepares food that is served without further cooking. Hands can become contaminated with *Shigella* bacteria when using the toilet or changing a diaper; if hands are not washed afterwards, they can spread bacteria to other surfaces and food.
- Foods harvested from *Shigella*-contaminated waters (especially shellfish) or grown in fields that use contaminated irrigation water on produce could also result in illness, especially if these foods are eaten raw.
- Foodborne illness outbreaks attributed to *Shigella* species have included various salads (tuna, chicken, turkey, shrimp, and potato), strawberries, spinach, raw oysters, milk, luncheon meats, pudding, and rice balls.
- Symptoms of shigellosis include: sudden severe diarrhea that is sometimes bloody, fever, severe abdominal cramping, nausea, and vomiting. Immunocompromised individuals, the elderly, and the very young are the most susceptible.
- On-set time is 24 to 72 hours after exposure. Illness usually lasts 5 to 7 days; however, it can cause long-term health effects such as reactive arthritis, an autoimmune disease.



ABOUT SHIGELLA

Humans are the most typical hosts of *Shigella* species, as it is not usually found in gastrointestinal tracts of other animals.

There are several strains of *Shigella* that cause a gastrointestinal disease called shigellosis that can damage the intestines.

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KEEP YOUR OPERATIONS AND CUSTOMERS SAFE

- Have strong supplier approval programs that verify suppliers: monitor produce growers for Good Agricultural Practices; verify shellfish are not harvested from contaminated waters; have Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) programs and intervention programs to reduce and prevent *Shigella* contamination; have trace-back capabilities; and are in compliance with all federal and local regulations.
- Ensure an approved water supply is used for all food facility operations.
- As preventive measures, have in place HACCP plans and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for produce washing, hand washing, personal hygiene, and sanitation.
- Have an employee wellness policy to exclude employees with symptoms of foodborne illness, such as vomiting and/or diarrhea.
- Maintain facilities so there is no sewage backflow, an imminent health hazard. Require the food establishment to close if this occurs in a food preparation area.
- Follow-up on any customer foodborne illness claims without delay and notify health department of multiple claims immediately.

5 MUST-KNOW FACTS FOR LOCATION EMPLOYEES

- 1** Wash hands thoroughly, especially after using the restroom. Pay special attention to scrubbing beneath fingernails, between fingers, and around wrists.
- 2** Wash raw vegetables and produce under running water or use a produce wash according to the label directions before preparing or eating.
- 3** Use gloves, tongs, or deli paper to prevent bare-hand contact with ready-to-eat foods.
- 4** Cook all foods to safe internal temperatures. Remember that seafood and produce represent special *Shigella* risks. Cook seafood to 145°F/63°C and vegetables to 135°F/57°C.
- 5** If you have any symptoms of foodborne illness, such as vomiting and/or diarrhea, inform your manager and do not work.