



County of Santa Cruz



HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT

To:	Santa Cruz County Healthcare Providers
From:	Lisa B. Hernandez, MD, MPH, County Health Officer
Subject:	Local Shigellosis Cases in Santa Cruz County; Test and Report Symptomatic Patients
Date:	February 8, 2024

Situational Update:

Since late-January 2024, four confirmed *Shigella sonnei* cases have been identified among individuals experiencing homelessness in Santa Cruz County. Upon further investigation it was identified that there are potentially more individuals experiencing diarrheal disease who have not sought testing in the North County area. For symptomatic individuals, providers should initiate enteric panel testing, complete and submit a CMR for all disease identified as reportable under [Title 17 Reportable Diseases and Conditions](#).

Shigellosis is a diarrheal illness caused by the highly infectious *Shigella* bacteria, and infected persons can shed up to four weeks after illness. Infections can be subclinical or self-limiting. Typical symptoms last 5-7 days and include watery or bloody diarrhea, abdominal pain, fever, and malaise.

Some infections can be quite severe, especially in young children, the elderly, and the immunocompromised. Severe symptoms can include dehydration, bacteremia, and seizures.

Most infections are transmitted person-to-person with a very low infectious dose via a fecal-oral route (e.g., poor handwashing, food preparation, contaminated water); sexual transmission is also known to occur.

ACTIONS REQUESTED OF HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

1. **SUSPECT** shigellosis in patients with compatible symptoms.
2. **TEST** by obtaining stool cultures and antimicrobial susceptibility testing. PCR testing does not replace stool culture.
3. Test shigellosis patients for HIV and STDs (particularly syphilis) as co-infections are common. Substance use disorders may present as co-morbidities.
4. **TREAT** appropriately, based on the antimicrobial susceptibility profile of the individual isolate.

5. **REPORT** suspected and confirmed shigellosis cases to the Communicable Disease Unit:
 - a. Call 831-454-4114 or submit a Confidential Morbidity Report (CMR) by faxing 831-454-5049 or via the CalREDIE Provider Portal.
 - b. It is especially important to report cases in sensitive occupations and situations (i.e. food handlers, direct care givers in health care facilities or group settings, or persons attending daycare, etc.). Cases in sensitive situations should be excluded from these settings while symptomatic and until Public Health restrictions are lifted.

6. **COUNSEL** patients on hand hygiene practices and avoiding activities while symptomatic that could pose a risk to others (e.g. food preparation for others, exposure to feces during sexual contact, recreational swimming, caring for small children, etc.).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Contact the Communicable Disease Unit at 831-454-4114 (Mon - Fri 8AM - 5PM) and 831-471-1170 (after hours and weekends).

- Disease Reporting Information: www.santacruzhealth.org/CDUnit
- Health Alerts: www.santacruzhealth.org/Alerts

Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Shigellosis Treatment Guidance:
www.cdc.gov/shigella/audience-medical-professionals.html

CDC Health Alert Network: Update – CDC Recommendations for Managing and Reporting Shigella Infections with Possible Reduced Susceptibility to Ciprofloxacin (2018): <https://emergency.cdc.gov/han/han00411.asp>

CDC Shigellosis Health Education Patient Poster: www.cdc.gov/shigella/do-you-have-diarrhea.html

California Department of Public Health (CDPH):
www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Shigellosis.aspx

CDPH Shigellosis Patient Fact Sheet:
www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/ShigellosisFactSheet.pdf

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.