



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:	Update on Local Shigellosis Case Count and Antibiotic Susceptibility
Date:	February 29, 2024

Situational Update:

Cases of *Shigella sonnei* have continued to increase throughout Santa Cruz County since the first case was identified in late January 2024. Twenty seven cases have now been identified based on clinical findings and/or testing, with 16 of these cases confirmed by laboratory results. Seven affected individuals have been hospitalized, and there are no known deaths due to this outbreak. The majority of these cases continue to be identified among individuals experiencing homelessness in Santa Cruz County. However, cases have continued to spread geographically, and the affected population now includes cases outside of the encampments that were initially identified as transmission sites. *Shigella* bacteria are easily transmitted because of the low infectious dose and we therefore may see spread to the broader community.

Based on isolated samples, this strain of *Shigella sonnei* is susceptible only to Ciprofloxacin and Levofloxacin (fluoroquinolones) and resistant to Ampicillin, Ceftriaxone, and Trimethoprim-Sulfamethoxazole.

Azithromycin and other macrolides can be considered for treatment however susceptibility testing was not performed. For all symptomatic individuals, providers should initiate enteric panel testing including Hepatitis A, as well as complete and submit a Confidential Morbidity Report (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 Hepatitis A, HIV and STIs (particularly syphilis), as co-infections are common. Substance use disorders may present as co-morbidities.
4. **TREAT** appropriately, considering local resistance patterns and individual susceptibility results.
 - **Empiric antibiotic treatment with fluoroquinolones (Ciprofloxacin or Levofloxacin).** Azithromycin and other macrolides can be considered for treatment. Subsequently tailor antibiotic treatment when individual susceptibility results are available.
 - Vaccinate with Hepatitis A vaccine, if patient is unvaccinated.
5. **REPORT** suspected and confirmed shigellosis cases to the Communicable Disease Unit:
 - Call 831-454-4114 or submit a Confidential Morbidity Report (CMR) by faxing 831-454-5049 or via the CalREDIE Provider Portal.
 - 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
- For County Shigella information visit: www.santacruzhealth.org/shigella

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

CDC Health Alert Network: increase in Extensively Drug-Resistant Shigellosis in the United States (2023):
<https://emergency.cdc.gov/han/2023/han00486.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.