



# County of Santa Cruz

## HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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### Public Health Division

### PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY UPDATE

**To:** All Healthcare Providers in Santa Cruz County  
**From:** Gail Newel, MD, MPH, County Public Health Officer  
**Subject:** *Local Shigellosis case cluster among persons experiencing homelessness; test & report all symptomatic patients*  
**Date:** January 6, 2020

#### Current Situation:

Between December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019, and January 2, 2020, a cluster of 3 confirmed *Shigella sonnei* cases have been identified at local Emergency Departments among persons experiencing homelessness. All providers should test and report any individual presenting with symptoms described below.

Between June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019 – January 2, 2020, 34 confirmed *Shigella sonnei* and *Shigella unspecified* cases were identified in an outbreak in Santa Cruz County (more than twice the average rate). Most diagnosed Santa Cruz County cases (68%) sought medical care at an emergency department, and 41% of all cases required hospitalization.

Fifty percent of the recent cases reported experiencing homelessness. Men who have sex with men are at an elevated risk for Shigellosis. Local *Shigella sonnei* cases continue to exist in the general population, as well.

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 All Clinicians:

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. Resistance to ampicillin and trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole is common, and resistance to ciprofloxacin and azithromycin is increasing. Test Shigellosis patients for HIV and STDs as co-infections are common in 20% or more of local cases reported this year.
3. **TREAT** appropriately, based on the antimicrobial susceptibility profile of the individual isolate.
4. **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.
5. **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.).

**This is an update to the 10/29/2019 advisory ([www.santacruzhealth.org/Alerts](http://www.santacruzhealth.org/Alerts)). If you did not receive the previous advisory, please contact the Public Information Officer at [Corinne.Hyland@santacruzcounty.us](mailto:Corinne.Hyland@santacruzcounty.us).**

**For further questions, please call the Communicable Disease Unit at (831) 454-4114.**

#### **Additional Shigellosis 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](http://www.santacruzhealth.org/CDUnit)
  - Health Alerts: [www.santacruzhealth.org/Alerts](http://www.santacruzhealth.org/Alerts)
- Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Shigellosis Treatment Guidance: [www.cdc.gov/shigella/audience-medical-professionals.html](http://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>
- California Department of Public Health (CDPH): [www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Shigellosis.aspx](http://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](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/ShigellosisFactSheet.pdf)
- CDC Shigellosis Health Education Patient Poster: [www.cdc.gov/shigella/do-you-have-diarrhea.html](http://www.cdc.gov/shigella/do-you-have-diarrhea.html)



**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.