



County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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Public Health Division

PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY

To: All Healthcare Providers in Santa Cruz County
From: Gail Newel, MD, MPH, County Public Health Officer
Subject: Increase in both *Shigella* cases and antibiotic resistance
Date: August 29, 2019

Current situation:

Santa Cruz County Public Health notes that the number of reported *Shigella sonnei* cases in the first *eight months* of 2019 is **double** the average *annual* count between 2016 and 2018 – excluding outbreaks (21 vs 10). Persons experiencing homelessness (PEH) and men who have sex with men (MSM) are particularly burdened, though *Shigella sonnei* cases continue to exist in our general population. Emerging evidence shows reduced susceptibility to ciprofloxacin and azithromycin (see “Actions” and “Additional resources” below). Transmission occurs easily via the fecal-oral route, and sexual transmission is known to occur. Consider testing patients with *Shigella* for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV; more than 20% of our recent shigellosis cases are living with HIV.

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
- Malaise

However, some infections **can be quite severe**, especially in young children, the elderly, and the immunocompromised. Severe symptoms can include:

- Dehydration
- Bacteremia
- Seizures

Asymptomatic infections may occur.

Widespread shigellosis outbreaks have occurred in California communities in recent years, including Long Beach in 2018 (21 cases) and San Francisco in 2014-15 (239 cases). In both outbreaks, PEH and MSM were particularly affected.

Actions Requested of All Clinicians:

1. **Suspect *Shigella* gastroenteritis** in patients with compatible symptoms.
2. **Test for *Shigella*** by obtaining stool cultures and ordering antimicrobial susceptibility testing. Resistance to ampicillin and trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole is common, and resistance to ciprofloxacin and azithromycin is increasing. Test patients with *Shigella* for HIV and other STDs, including extragenital testing, as co-infection is common.
3. **Treat appropriately**, based on the antimicrobial susceptibility profile of the individual isolate. Note that routine antimicrobial susceptibility tests for *Shigella* may not include some common oral antibiotics.
4. **Report** Shigellosis cases to the CD Unit: *Call* 831-454-4114 or submit a Confidential Morbidity Report (CMR) by *fax* 831-454-5049 or via the CalREDIE Provider Portal. It is especially important to **report suspect and confirmed cases in sensitive occupations and situations** (i.e. food handlers, direct care givers in health care facilities or group settings like hospitals or daycares, or persons who attend childcare or other congregate programs where fecal-oral transmission is a public health concern). Cases in sensitive situations should be excluded from such settings while ill. Reporting information: www.santacruzhealth.org/CDunit
5. **Counsel patients** about the importance of careful handwashing with soap and water after using the toilet and avoiding activities that would pose a risk of transmission (e.g. preparing food for others, exposure to feces of an infected person during sexual contact, recreational swimming, caring for small children, etc.).

Additional *Shigella* resources:

- Contact the Communicable Disease Unit at 831-454-4114 (Monday-Friday 8AM-5PM) and 831-471-1170 (after hours and weekends).
- Centers for Disease Control (CDC): <https://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):
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Shigellosis.aspx>
- CDPH Shigellosis Patient Fact Sheet:
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/ShigellosisFactSheet.pdf>



Public Health
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Santa Cruz County

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.