



HEALTH ADVISORY
Cluster of Shigellosis and Shigellemia Cases
FEBRUARY 16, 2024

SITUATION:

Alameda County Public Health Department has detected an increase in reports of infections due to *Shigella* bacteria species in Alameda County, including cases of bacteremia known as shigellemia. These cases have mainly occurred among residents of Board and Care facilities and persons experiencing homelessness (PEH); some patients also have a history of drug use. In these recently reported cases, most patients have required antibiotics, and some have required hospitalization. Associated isolates have been susceptible to fluoroquinolones and carbapenems.

Shigellosis is an acute enteric infection caused by several species of *Shigella* bacteria and is an important cause of domestically acquired and travel-associated bacterial diarrhea in the United States. Most *Shigella* infections are mild and self-limited; however, antimicrobial treatment may be indicated to prevent complications or shorten the duration of illness. *Shigella* bacteria are transmitted by the fecal-oral route directly through person-to-person contact including sexual contact and indirectly through contaminated food, water, and other routes. It can be extremely contagious.

Healthcare professionals are urged to be vigilant for possible cases of *Shigella* infection, to report cases to their local health department, and to educate patients and communities at increased risk about prevention and transmission. Due to recent reports of shigellemia, clinicians are advised to have a low threshold for conducting both blood and stool cultures for suspected cases. Importantly, clinicians must request susceptibility testing against all the common antibiotics used to treat *Shigella* if cultures are positive. In addition, providers are reminded to submit *Shigella* isolates to the Alameda County Public Health Laboratory (ACPHL) for further testing.

Actions Requested of Healthcare Providers:

1. Test patients from Board and Care facilities and PEH who have signs and symptoms of an enteric infection for *Shigella* in the stool AND have a low threshold to obtain blood cultures.
2. Report suspected and confirmed cases of *Shigella* infection to Alameda County Public Health Department by completing a CMR and submitting the completed form via secure fax or email. Please include full demographics, and note on the CMR if the patient is known to reside or work in a congregate setting or is experiencing homelessness. Report by fax: 510-273-3744 or report via secure email to AcuteCD@acgov.org.
3. When a patient with *Shigella* is identified, especially if culture independent testing is utilized, request reflex cultures and susceptibility.
4. Follow-up on susceptibility testing and ensure antimicrobial therapy remains effective for the duration of treatment.
5. Request that the isolate be sent to ACPHL for confirmatory testing and analysis to aid in the outbreak investigation.

6. Please counsel patients with suspected or confirmed shigellosis about measures they can take to keep others healthy. Patients taking antibiotics should continue to follow prevention measures.

All patients with suspected or confirmed shigellosis should:

- Stay home from school or from non-urgent healthcare, food service, or childcare jobs while sick or until the health department says it's safe to return.
- During diarrhea and for 2 weeks after it ends,
 - Abstain from sexual activity that includes sex play and sex toys (e.g., anal, oral, penile, or vaginal)
 - [Wash hands](#) often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, including at key times such as after using the toilet, before and after changing diapers, cleaning up after someone who is sick, and before preparing or eating food.
 - Do not prepare food for others, if possible.
 - [Stay out of recreational water](#), including swimming pools, hot tubs, water playgrounds, oceans, lakes, and rivers.

[Information for Specific Groups | Shigella – Shigellosis | CDC](#)