



HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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Stanislaus County Seeing Increase in Shigella Cases

PROPER HAND WASHING IS URGED TO PREVENT SHIGELLA INFECTIONS

With the approaching holiday season, Stanislaus County Health Services Agency (SCHSA) and the Department of Environmental Resources (DER) would like to remind and encourage people to wash their hands and stay home from work, school, or holiday celebrations if they have diarrhea.

This recommendation is even more important following an increase in the number of people reported to SCHSA during 2016 with Shigella infections. Shigella infection has been confirmed in 123 people in Stanislaus County. There were only 19 confirmed cases of Shigella infections in 2015.

Most Shigella infections are the result of bacteria passing from improperly washed hands from one person to the mouth of another person, often through handling contaminated objects or food. Poor hand washing and hygiene (especially after changing diapers or toileting) increases the risk of infection. "Regular and frequent hand washing with soap and running water is the single most important preventive measure to interrupt the spread of shigellosis. Everyone should thoroughly wash their hands after using the restroom or changing diapers and before eating or preparing food. People diagnosed with Shigella infection should be especially vigilant in their hand washing practices," said Dr. John Walker, Public Health Officer.

People should wash their hands:

- Before, during, and after preparing food
- Before eating food
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick
- Before and after treating a cut or wound
- After using the toilet
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste
- After touching garbage

There are five steps to good hand washing:

1. **Wet** your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
2. **Lather** your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Be sure to lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
3. **Scrub** your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.
4. **Rinse** your hands well under clean, running water.
5. **Dry** your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

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These videos can be used in visual media to demonstrate good hand washing:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/cdctv/healthyliving/hygiene/fight-germs-wash-hands.html> (English)
- <https://www.cdc.gov/cdctv/spanish/healthyliving/acabe-con-los-microbios.html> (Spanish)

Persons with any diarrheal illness should stay home from child care, school or group activities, and should not participate in jobs involving food preparation or healthcare until their diarrhea has resolved. Routine and thorough hand washing and cleaning of surfaces in the above settings is important to limiting the spread of the disease.

Shigellosis is a highly infectious disease caused by a group of bacteria called Shigella. People infected with Shigella may have fever, stomach cramping, and mild or severe diarrhea, often with traces of blood or mucus in the stool. However, some infected people may not show any symptoms at all. Symptoms occur from 1-7 days after exposure, but usually within 1-3 days, and last an average of 4-7 days.

Healthcare providers are required to report Shigella infections to the Stanislaus County Health Services Agency so that follow up with each diagnosed person may help to minimize the risk of spreading the infection to friends, family, and other contacts. People who experience diarrhea for more than two days should see their healthcare provider and ask about being tested for Shigella. Antibiotics can be prescribed to treat shigellosis and also decrease the time a person can pass the infection to others.

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