



County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

POST OFFICE BOX 962, 1080 Emeline Ave., SANTA CRUZ, CA 95061-0962
TELEPHONE: (831) 454-4000 FAX: (831) 454-4488 TDD: Call 711

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 outbreak ongoing in Santa Cruz County; test & report symptomatic patients
Date: October 29, 2019

Current Situation:

Between June 1st - October 15th, 24 confirmed *Shigella sonnei* cases have been identified in an ongoing outbreak in Santa Cruz County. An average of 13 cases were reported during the same time period over the past three years. Fifty percent of the recent cases reported experiencing homelessness, though local *Shigella sonnei* cases continue to exist in the general population. Men who have sex with men are particularly affected 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 diagnosed Santa Cruz County cases (67%) sought medical care at the emergency department, and half of local cases required hospitalization.

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 08/29/2019 advisory (www.santacruzhealth.org/Alerts). If you did not receive the previous advisory, please contact the Public Information Officer at 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
 - Health Alerts: www.santacruzhealth.org/Alerts
- Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Shigellosis Treatment Guidance: 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
- CDPH Shigellosis Patient Fact Sheet: www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/ShigellosisFactSheet.pdf
- CDC Shigellosis Health Promotion Fact Sheet: www.cdc.gov/shigella/do-you-have-diarrhea.html



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.