



Connie Beck, Director
Social Services | Public Health | Behavioral Health

news release

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Shigella cases being investigated

Public and Environmental Health officials are working to contain local cases of the gastrointestinal illness Shigella bacteria, after three lab-confirmed cases and two more suspected cases infected Eureka residents during the past month.

The cases span multiple households, infecting school-age children and adults, including a person experiencing homelessness.

Officials believe the infection may have been spread through one or more Eureka laundromats, after an infected person washed contaminated clothing at the facility.

Environmental Health officials are working closely with the operators of the two laundromats, the Self-Serve Laundromat on Summer Street and Eureka Laundromat on Little Fairfield Street, to make sure their facilities are cleaned and disinfected properly.

Shigella germs are found in stool, and infection is spread by eating food or drinking liquids contaminated by an infected person, or when a person touches a contaminated surface or object and then touches their mouth or puts the object into their mouth. People infected with shigellosis typically experience a fever, abdominal cramps and diarrhea which may be bloody.

Onset of shigellosis symptoms usually occurs one to two days after exposure—but may take longer—and lasts around a week. Infected people can remain contagious up to six weeks after symptoms resolve.

Most people with shigellosis recover completely without severe complications. In rare cases Shigella may cause bloodstream infections, seizures, kidney failure or arthritis.

The best way to prevent the spread of shigellosis is to wash hands:

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

People with shigellosis should:

- Stay home from school or from health care, food service or childcare jobs while sick
- Abstain from sharing food
- Abstain from swimming and hot tubs
- Abstain from having sex for at least two weeks after symptoms resolve.

If you are experiencing symptoms, contact your primary care provider or call Public Health at 707-445-6200.

The news release DHHS issued this morning regarding local Shigella cases incorrectly identified shigellosis as a virus. In fact, shigellosis is an infection caused by the bacteria Shigella. We regret the error.

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