



HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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MEDIA ADVISORY

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Stanislaus County Seeing Increase in Shigella Cases *PROPER HANDWASHING URGED TO PREVENT SHIGELLA INFECTIONS*

Stanislaus County – The 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 or school if they are having 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 47 people so far this year in Stanislaus County; historically only about 10 cases of Shigella infection are confirmed annually.

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. Symptoms last an average of 4-7 days.

Most Shigella infections are the result of bacteria passing from improperly washed hands of 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. Shigella infections are particularly likely to occur among toddlers who are not fully toilet-trained. Family members and playmates of such children are at high risk of becoming infected.

“Regular and frequent hand washing with soap and running water is the single most important preventive measure to interrupt the spread of shigellosis,” said Dr. John Walker, Public Health Officer. “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.”

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.

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. This is especially true for people who had contact with someone diagnosed with Shigella. Antibiotics can be prescribed to treat shigellosis and also decrease the time a person can pass the infection to others.