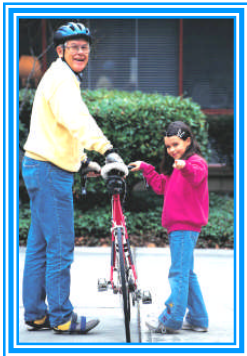


Shigellosis

Why is shigellosis important?

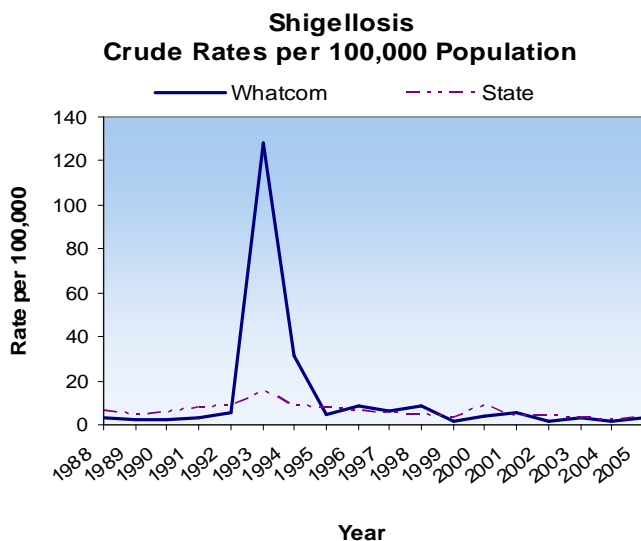
Shigellosis infection is the third most common foodborne illness in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). It is a common bacterial infection caused by four major groups of shigella. These bacteria affect humans, primarily causing intestinal tract infections. Annually, there may be 200 to 800 cases reported in Washington. CDC estimates that the total number of cases of shigellosis is actually 20 times the number of reported cases. The bacteria are spread from person to person and only a very small number of organisms (10 to 100) are required to cause infection. An infected person can pass shigella to others through contaminated food or water due to improper hand washing, or as a result of certain sexual practices.



Although anyone exposed to the shigella bacteria can get the disease, the most severe cases are seen in children, the elderly, and people with weakened immune systems. Symptoms include bloody and/or watery diarrhea, fevers, abdominal cramping, nausea and occasionally vomiting. Symptoms generally appear one to three days after exposure to the bacteria. Serious complications include seizures, particularly for children, and Reiters syndrome (joint pains, irritation of the eyes, and painful urination). Infected individuals can be contagious from the onset of symptoms up to four weeks or longer. Infected individuals without symptoms can transmit the disease for months. Mild cases usually resolve without antibiotics.

How are we doing?

The following chart and table provide shigellosis crude incidence rates per 100,000 population for Whatcom County and Washington State from 1988 through 2005. The table also provides the number of cases through 2005.



Note:

These comparisons may be influenced by variations in diagnosis and reporting by health care providers. Thus, if reporting in Whatcom County is more frequent than in other local health jurisdictions, reported rates will be higher.

The general trend for Whatcom County followed that of Washington State with the exception of the 1993 outbreak, which resulted in 181 cases and an incidence rate of 128.2 per 100,000 population. In 2005, the incidence rate was only 2.8 per 100,000, slightly under the state rate of 3.0.

What remains to be done?

In the case of shigellosis, it is not possible to provide a specific set of guidelines applicable to all situations. Therefore, Whatcom County Health Department is prepared to evaluate each shigellosis case and take appropriate steps to prevent the spread of the infection based on case investigation findings. Current interventions—which include excluding infected food workers from food establishment and excluding infected children from childcare setting—should be evaluated for effectiveness and an intervention improvement plan could then be developed based on evaluation recommendations.

**Shigellosis
Crude Rates & Cases per 100,000 Population**

| Year | Whatcom County | | Washington State | |
|------|-----------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|
| | Rate per 100,000 Population | # of Cases | Rate per 100,000 Population | # of Cases |
| 1988 | 3.3 | 4 | 6.6 | 306 |
| 1989 | 2.4 | 3 | 4.9 | 232 |
| 1990 | 2.4 | 3 | 5.7 | 278 |
| 1991 | 3.0 | 4 | 8.1 | 405 |
| 1992 | 5.8 | 8 | 8.5 | 439 |
| 1993 | 128.2 | 181 | 15.1 | 796 |
| 1994 | 31.6 | 46 | 8.9 | 478 |
| 1995 | 4.7 | 7 | 7.8 | 424 |
| 1996 | 8.5 | 13 | 6.0 | 333 |
| 1997 | 6.4 | 10 | 5.6 | 318 |
| 1998 | 8.7 | 14 | 4.8 | 276 |
| 1999 | 1.2 | 2 | 3.0 | 172 |
| 2000 | 3.6 | 6 | 8.5 | 501 |
| 2001 | 5.3 | 9 | 3.9 | 236 |
| 2002 | 1.2 | 2 | 3.8 | 230 |
| 2003 | 3.4 | 6 | 3.1 | 188 |
| 2004 | 1.7 | 3 | 2.2 | 133 |
| 2005 | 2.8 | 5 | 3.0 | 185 |

SHIGELLOSIS PREVENTION GUIDELINES:

- ❖ *Wash your hands with soap and warm water before and after handling foods, after using the bathroom, or after changing a baby's diaper.*
- ❖ *Make sure children wash their hands properly.*
- ❖ *Never prepare food for other people if you have diarrhea.*
- ❖ *Do not swim in pools or lakes if you have diarrhea.*
- ❖ *If a child in diapers has shigellosis, dispose of the diaper in a closed-lid garbage can and disinfect the diaper changing area. The adult and child should wash hands with soap and warm water immediately after changing the diaper.*



Always properly dispose of diapers

