

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO
P. O. BOX 3378
HONOLULU, HI 96801-3378

In reply, please refer to:
File:

January 16, 2024

MEDICAL ADVISORY: SHIGELLOSIS OUTBREAK

- Whole genome sequencing has identified a shigellosis outbreak with 17 confirmed cases, many with connections to the Kailua-Kona area of Hawai'i County.
- Consider shigellosis as a diagnosis for patients with fever and diarrhea.
- Order stool cultures or CIDT for suspected cases.
- Report shigellosis cases to the Hawai'i Department of Health.

Dear Healthcare Providers,

Since November 28, 2023, whole genome sequencing (WGS) has identified a local outbreak of *Shigella sonnei* with 17 confirmed cases. Twelve cases have been hospitalized; there have been no deaths. For this same period in winter 2022, only five *Shigella* cases were reported to Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH).

Of the 17 confirmed cases, 14 are Hawai'i Island residents residing in the West Hawai'i area, two are Oahu residents, and one is an out of state resident. One of the Oahu residents and the out of state resident reported recent travel to Hawai'i Island. The cases range in age from 25 to 82 years and are evenly distributed between male and female. Eleven additional shigella cases are awaiting WGS to help determine if they are part of the same cluster. A common specific exposure or cause has yet to have been identified.

Shigellosis is an enteric infection caused by *Shigella* bacteria. Those infected generally experience diarrhea, abdominal pain, and fever. Shigellosis is highly contagious, and transmission is fecal-oral via contaminated food and water or by direct person-to-person contact.

Healthcare providers are encouraged to test patients with compatible symptoms for shigella. When shigellosis is suspected, request a stool specimen for testing by culture or by a culture-independent diagnostic test (CIDT). If a CIDT is positive for shigellosis, confirm the diagnosis with a stool culture. All positive laboratory results for *Shigella* are required to be reported to the Department of Health (DOH). All positive isolates or specimens are required to be submitted to the Hawai'i State Laboratories Division for confirmation and serological typing.

It is not clear whether this recent increase in Hawai'i is driven by a drug resistant form of shigellosis. Given the increasing rate of antimicrobial-resistant shigellosis worldwide, perform antimicrobial susceptibility testing if you plan to treat with an antibiotic.

Shigellosis is usually a self-limiting illness lasting 5-7 days. While antibiotics can shorten the duration of symptoms if given early in the illness, due to concerns for antibiotic resistance, antibiotics are generally only recommended for immunocompromised individuals or patients with severe infections. Patients with bloody diarrhea should not use anti-diarrheal medications as these may make symptoms worse.


During acute illness, enteric precautions should be used. Patients who work in food handling and direct patient care occupations (including daycares) should not return to work until two consecutive stool cultures or rectal swabs collected greater than or equal to 24 hours apart, and not less than 48 hours after cessation of antimicrobial therapy are negative for *Shigella*. All patients should avoid recreational water while symptomatic. All patients should be educated on the importance of frequent hand washing, staying home while sick, avoiding preparing food for others, and to refrain from sex (vaginal, anal, or oral) for one week after diarrhea resolves.

Healthcare providers and laboratories should notify the DOH of positive *Shigella* cases so that a detailed food and other exposure history can be obtained. Cases can be reported to the following numbers:

Oahu (Disease Reporting Line): (808) 586-4586
Maui District Health Office: (808) 984-8213
Kauai District Health Office: (808) 241-3563
Hawai'i District Health Office: (808) 933-0912
After Hours (Physician's Exchange): (808) 600-3625 or call Toll Free 1-800-360-2575

More information can be found at the websites below:
[Shigellosis | Disease Outbreak Control Division \(Hawai'i.gov\)](#)
[Information for Healthcare Professionals | Shigella – Shigellosis | CDC](#)

We appreciate your assistance in protecting the health of Hawaii's residents and visitors.

Sincerely,

Nathan C. Tan, MD
Deputy State Epidemiologist