

**Mission:**

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



**Ron DeSantis**  
Governor

**Vision:** To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

February 14, 2019

Dear Early Childcare Provider:

Since January 1, there has been an increase in the number of *Shigella* cases reported to the Florida Department of Health in Broward County as compared to the same time last year. The majority of these cases were in school aged children.

Symptoms include: watery or bloody diarrhea, abdominal pain, fever, and malaise starting a day or two after exposure. Symptoms usually resolve in 5 to 7 days. People who are sick with shigellosis have *Shigella* germs in their stool while they have diarrhea and for up to a week or two after the diarrhea has gone away. *Shigella* is very contagious; just a small amount of germs can make someone sick. People could get sick by:

- Getting *Shigella* germs on their hands and then touching their food or mouth. This may happen after:
  - Touching surfaces contaminated with germs from stool from a sick person, such as toys, bathroom fixtures, changing tables or diaper pails.
  - Changing the diaper of a sick child or caring for a sick person.
- Eating food that was prepared by someone who is sick with shigellosis.
- Swallowing recreational water (for example, lake or river water) while swimming or drinking water that is contaminated with stool containing the germ.

To prevent the spread of *Shigella* bacteria, please share the following with your staff and parents:

- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds:
  - After using the toilet
  - After hanging a diaper or assisting anyone with toileting
  - **Note:** Wash child's hands in addition to your own.
- Avoid preparing food for other people while you are sick.
- Try to stay home while you are sick.
- People who work in healthcare, childcare, or the food service industry should follow the guidance of the Florida Department of Health in Broward County about when it is safe to return to work.
- **Children with shigellosis should not attend childcare, school, or group activities while they have diarrhea. They should not return to daycare, school or group activities until at least 48 hours after symptoms have ceased.**
- Avoid swimming until you have fully recovered.

To report a case of Shigellosis or any other reportable disease or to obtain additional information, please call (954) 847-8045. Please see the attached information from CDC regarding *Shigella* or visit <https://www.cdc.gov/shigella/infection-sources.html>. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paula Thaqi, MD, MPH".

Paula Thaqi, MD, MPH  
Director

## **Shigella Information for Childcare Facilities (excerpted from [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov))**

Children younger than 5 years are the most likely to get shigellosis, but people of all ages can get this disease. Many outbreaks are related to childcare settings and schools, because *Shigella* germs spread from young children to their family members and others in their community.

Shigellosis outbreaks at childcare facilities can be prevented by following the guidance below at all times.

### **Educate staff and parents:**

- Inform all staff about the symptoms of shigellosis, how *Shigella* germs spread from person to person, and control measures to be followed, like regular handwashing and good diapering practices.
- **Inform parents** about the symptoms of shigellosis, how germs spread, outbreak control policies, and hygiene and cleanliness procedures to reduce spread in the facility and at home

### **Practice good hygiene:**

- Steps to good handwashing:
  - Wet your hands with clean, running water, turn off the tap, and apply soap.
  - Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Be sure to lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
  - Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice.
  - Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
  - Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.
- For children:
  - Supervise or assist handwashing when needed.
  - Wash hands:
    - Upon arrival at the childcare facility
    - After they use the bathroom
    - After having their diapers changed
    - After playing outside
    - After blowing their noses
    - Before eating snacks or meals
    - Before leaving the facility

- For adults:
  - Wash Hands
    - Upon arrival at the facility
    - Before eating or preparing food
    - After using the bathroom
    - After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the bathroom
    - After helping a child blow his or her nose
    - Before and after caring for someone who is sick, which includes after touching clothing, bedding, toilets, or other surfaces touched by a person sick with diarrhea
  - Where staffing permits, people who change diapers should not prepare or serve food

**Encourage good diapering practices:**

- Separate diaper-changing areas from play and food preparation areas.
- Ensure children wear clothing over their diapers to prevent the spread of germs.
- Wash hands (both yours and the child's) after each diaper change.

**Clean and disinfect toys and surfaces.**

**Establish and enforce policies on water play and swimming:**

- Water tables and basins of water used for activities can spread germs. For this reason, CDC does not recommend their use. In facilities choosing to use them, have children and staff wash their hands before and after water play.
- Don't use temporary inflatable or rigid fill and drain swimming pools and slides because the water they contain isn't treated with chemicals that can kill germs, as it would be in properly maintained permanent swimming pools with circulating water and a filter system.
- Where pool, splash pads or freshwater swimming venues are provided:
  - Exclude children diagnosed with shigellosis from water play and swimming for one week after their diarrhea has resolved.
  - Have children and staff shower with soap before swimming.
    - If a child is too young to shower independently, have staff wash the child, particularly the rear end, with soap and water.
  - Take frequent bathroom breaks or check their diapers often.
  - Change diapers in a diaper-changing area or bathroom and not by the water.

- Discourage children from getting the water in their mouths and swallowing it.

**Notify the Florida Department of Health in Broward County at 954-734-3046 when a child in your facility has been diagnosed with shigellosis:**

- Shigellosis is a reportable condition in all states, meaning all cases must be reported to the state or local health department.
- Your state or local health department will contact the patient (or patient's family member) to learn more about their sickness, recommend ways to prevent the spread of *Shigella* germs, and tell them when it is safe to return to childcare.
- Public health departments do not share personal information, such as name and birthdate, to protect the privacy of the patient.

#### **Intensified control measures for shigellosis outbreaks in a childcare setting**

If an outbreak of shigellosis occurs in a childcare setting, use these prevention measures in addition to those listed above:

- Notify parents of children who have been in contact with a sick person. Parents should contact the child's healthcare provider if their child develops diarrhea.
- Stop all water play and swimming. This includes any play or activities involving water tables, splash pads, or public pool visits. The water can become contaminated and spread *Shigella* germs.
- Follow recommended handwashing practices:
  - Schedule and supervise handwashing of all children:
    1. Upon arrival at the facility,
    2. After outdoor play,
    3. Before meals and snacks, and
    4. Upon leaving the childcare setting.
  - Supervise handwashing after diaper changes and using the bathroom.
- Notify the Florida Department of Health in Broward County at 954-734-3046 when a child in your facility has been diagnosed with shigellosis.