

## St. Louis County Department of Health – Shigella Health Alert

July 28, 2009

The St. Louis County Department of Health is currently investigating shigellosis outbreaks in two daycare centers. Twenty-five cases have been reported to the health department during the past two weeks.

The St. Louis County Department of Health is asking local physicians to:

**Consider:** *Shigella* infection when evaluating any child, infant, or adult who presents with diarrhea, fever, nausea, vomiting, and cramps, especially if they were exposed to an individual or facility associated with a known *Shigella* case.

**Test:** Due to the public health impact of *shigellosis*, providers should attempt to get specimens for culture and antibiotic sensitivity tests before treating with antibiotics. Antibiotic sensitivity testing is routinely available through commercial laboratories and is valuable when dealing with an outbreak situation such as this.

**Treat:** *Shigella sp.* are frequently resistant to antibiotics. In the United States, sentinel surveillance data indicate that approximately 80% of *Shigella sp.* are resistant to ampicillin, 40% are resistant to trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole, and less than 1% are resistant to ceftriaxone and ciprofloxin ([www.cdc.gov/narms](http://www.cdc.gov/narms)). St. Louis County currently has isolates resistant to trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole. Due to the shorter course of treatment, a higher likelihood of compliance with antibiotic completion, and FDA approval for use among individuals under 18 years of age, azithromycin is a recommended course of treatment. Empiric treatment should be considered as soon as the stool sample is collected.

**Report:** Shigellosis is a Category 1 reportable disease. Cases should be reported to the local public health department in your jurisdiction within 24 hours of first knowledge **or suspicion** by telephone, facsimile transmission or other rapid means of communication. In St. Louis County, call 314 615-1630 to report cases or fax them to 314-615-8346.

**Exclude:** Cases and symptomatic contacts of shigellosis patients should be **excluded** from food handling, daycare, the care of children or patients, and other occupations that pose significant risk of transmission until diarrhea ceases and two successive negative stool cultures are obtained. Specimens should be collected at least 24 hours apart beginning no sooner than 48 hours following the last dose of antibiotics. **The Missouri Code of State Regulations excludes children with shigellosis and symptomatic contacts of shigellosis patients from returning to childcare facilities until this requirement is met.** Commercial food handlers must provide documentation of two consecutive negative stool specimens before returning to work. Children and adults with diarrhea should remain out of public and private swimming pools, saunas, spas, or any water activity for one week following the end of diarrhea.

Communication is a key element in protecting the health of our community. We appreciate your continued support and cooperation.

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