



# Renfrew County and District Health Unit

*"Optimal Health for All in Renfrew County and District"*

## Public Health Alert

**To:** RCD Physicians, Nurse Practitioners and Acute Care

**Date:** March 24, 2023

**From:** Dr. Ian Gemmill, Acting Medical Officer of Health RCDHU

**Subject:** **XDR *Shigella sonnei*; possible sexual transmission**

Dear Colleagues:

Please find attached from the Ministry of Health: 'Memorandum: XDR *Shigella sonnei*: Possible Sexual Transmission; March 16, 2023.'

Shigellosis

Shigellosis is immediately reportable in Ontario (see below for reporting details). It is transmitted by the fecal-oral route, directly through person-to-person contact including sexual contact, and indirectly through contaminated food, water and other routes. The risk of infection through sexual transmission is high.

XDR *Shigella sonnei* in Ontario At least 10 individuals in Ontario have tested positive for extensively drug resistant (XDR) *Shigella sonnei*, with illness onset between March 29, 2022, and January 31, 2023. The predominant route of transmission among these cases is sexual contact between men who have sex with men (MSM). Some cases reported travel abroad.

XDR *Shigella* is defined as resistant to the following five antimicrobials:

- Ampicillin
- Fluoroquinolones
- Third-generation cephalosporins
- Azithromycin
- Trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole

The incubation period for shigellosis is 1-7 days, and it is associated with the following signs and symptoms, though can also be asymptomatic:

- Watery or bloody diarrhea which may contain mucus
- Severe abdominal cramps
- Tenesmus
- Fever and malaise
- Nausea and vomiting



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## **Recommended Actions for Health Care Providers**

Please refer to the attached memorandum from the Ministry of Health for recommended actions related to the follow-up of Shigella cases and testing and treatment considerations.

If concerned about sexually transmitted proctocolitis or enteritis, consider testing for other STIs and bloodborne infections, including HIV, syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, hepatitis B and hepatitis C at exposed sites as appropriate.

Individuals with shigellosis must be excluded from high-risk settings until they receive a negative stool sample or rectal swab collected at least 24 hours after cessation of symptoms or 48 hours after completion of antibiotic therapy. This applies to food handlers, healthcare providers, and caregivers or daycare attendees.

Sexual activity should be avoided from symptom onset until at least seven days after symptoms have stopped. Sexual or other activities where inadvertent ingestion of bacteria may occur, either through direct contact with a body part or contact with an object, should be avoided for four to six weeks, in consideration of the shedding period for shigellosis.

Most patients will improve without antibiotic therapy. If antibiotic therapy is required, therapy should be guided by susceptibility testing in consultation with an infectious disease specialist or other clinician knowledgeable in treating antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

## **Laboratory Testing and Additional Information**

For laboratory information, go to [Test Information Index | Public Health Ontario \(PHO\)](#) and refer to Shigella entries on enteric culture and enteric bacterial confirmation and speciation. Note that antimicrobial susceptibility testing is routinely performed on Shigella.

Per the Ministry of Health memorandum, all laboratories performing bacterial stool testing should continue to send their cultured Shigella isolates to PHO's laboratory for routine subtyping surveillance.

## **Reporting to Public Health**

If you have a suspected or confirmed case of shigellosis, it should be reported immediately:

- Monday to Friday from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm: Call 613-580-2424, extension 24224 and leave a detailed, confidential message including your contact information; or fax 613-580-9640
  - After hours, weekends, or holidays: Call 3-1-1 and ask to speak to Public Health on call
- A reporting form and a generic webform are available for your convenience. Please note that OHIP fee code K034 can be billed for reporting a specified reportable disease



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(including shigellosis) to a Medical Officer of Health; refer to the schedule of benefits for details.



Memo to PHUs\_XDR  
Shigella sonnei\_March