



# **NEWS RELEASE**

## **St. Charles County Government**

**Department of Community Health and the Environment**

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### **Daycares Hit by Shigella Infections**

**St. Charles County, Missouri** – The St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment is currently monitoring the spread of a bacterial infection known as shigellosis. About three dozen cases have been reported in daycares around the county in the last month. In addition, higher than normal numbers have been reported in surrounding counties in recent months. Since the disease spreads easily, the health department is taking steps to educate citizens and avert a wider outbreak in St. Charles County.

Shigellosis is caused by a group of bacteria known as *Shigella*. Symptoms of the disease include watery or bloody diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramping, fever, and headache. Infection usually resolves in five to seven days. The elderly, young children, or those with weakened immune systems are at greatest risk for a severe infection that may require hospitalization.

*Shigella* is transmitted by the bacterium passing from stools or soiled fingers from one person to the mouth of another person. It can also be acquired by consuming contaminated food or water. Individuals infected with *Shigella* and their symptomatic contacts should be excluded from food handling, caring for children or patients, or any other activity that would cause the disease to spread. Young children diagnosed with shigellosis can return to daycare after they are off medication for at least 48 hours and have two consecutive negative stool cultures obtained at least 24 hours apart.

To prevent the spread of *Shigella*, follow these tips from the Centers for Disease Control.

- wash hands with soap and warm water frequently and thoroughly, especially after using the toilet, after changing diapers, and before preparing foods or beverages
- dispose of soiled diapers properly
- disinfect diaper changing areas after use
- keep children with diarrhea out of school or child care
- supervise hand washing by children after they use the toilet

For more information about the St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment, call (636) 949-7400 or visit [www.scchealth.org](http://www.scchealth.org).

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