News from the Wyoming Department of Health

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Fremont County Shigellosis Outbreak Continues to Grow

At least 35 cases of *Shigella sonnei* infection have been identified in Fremont County as of November 20, according to the Indian Health Service and the Wyoming Department of Health.

Shigellosis is a bacterial disease that causes diarrhea, fever, stomach cramping and sometimes bloody stools, according to Kelly Weidenbach, surveillance epidemiologist with the Wyoming Department of Health. õA *Shigella* outbreak of this size is considered rare in Wyoming,ö Weidenbach said.

At least 12 local children have been hospitalized over the last few months because of the disease. Weidenbach said the majority of the cases among elementary school-aged children.

Indian Health Service and state health officials have been working together to reduce transmission of the infection by identifying persons who have *Shigella*-related symptoms, by encouraging testing and by educating the public about prevention.

People with diarrhea lasting more than 72 hours, diarrhea or loose stools with blood, or diarrhea accompanied by a high fever should see a medical professional to determine if they should be tested for *Shigella*.

Symptoms of shigellosis typically begin one to three days after a person is exposed and last five to seven days without treatment. *Shigella* bacteria are present in the stools of infected persons while they are sick and for a week or two afterwards.

Most *Shigella* infections are the result of the bacterium passing from stools or soiled fingers of one person to the mouth of another person. Some people who are infected may have no symptoms, but can still pass on the infection. Transmission of *Shigella* is especially common among toddlers and other children who are not fully toilet-trained.

Tips for preventing Shigella infection:

- 1) Frequent and careful hand-washing with soap and water can help prevent *Shigella* infections. Hands should always be washed after using the restroom, after changing diapers and before preparing food or beverages.
- 2) People with diarrhea should not handle food, work in patient care or work in a day care setting.
- 3) Young children should be supervised when hand-washing.
- 4) When possible, children with *Shigella* infection who are still in diapers should not be in contact with uninfected children.

- 5) People who have *Shigella* infection should not prepare food or pour water for others until they have been shown to be free of infection (produce negative stool samples).
- 6) Used diapers should be disposed of properly in a closed-lid garbage can.
- 7) After use, diaper-changing areas should be wiped down with a disinfectant such as household bleach, Lysol, or bactericidal wipes.
- 8) Children with diarrhea should be excluded from daycare settings until their symptoms cease.

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