



CONTRA COSTA HEALTH

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Public Health Advisory March 12, 2024

Increase in *Shigella* Cases Among Persons Experiencing Homelessness in Northern California

The California Department of Public Health has been alerted to recent increases in *Shigellosis* cases and specifically *Shigella* infections among persons experiencing homelessness (PEH). Since January 1, 2024, there has been a 53% increase in reported *Shigella* cases overall and a 72% increase in *Shigella* cases among PEH compared to January and February 2023. Locally, both Alameda and Santa Cruz counties issued health advisories in February 2024 regarding increases in *Shigella* infection among their PEH populations. The Alameda Co Health Advisory can be accessed [here](#) and the Santa Cruz Co Public Health Alert can be accessed [here](#). We are aware that PEH populations commonly cross county lines. We have been alerted to one case genotypically linked to Alameda Co's outbreak.

Shigella is transmitted via the fecal-oral route. Inadequate access to hygiene and sanitation, as well as crowded conditions or congregate housing, can increase the risk of spread. An association has been found between heavy precipitation and the risk of shigellosis among PEH as it can exacerbate existing poor sanitary conditions and crowding in shelters/encampments.

Contra Costa Public Health is asking providers to be aware of the increase and remain vigilant especially when working with vulnerable populations. If a patient presents with clinical symptoms concerning for *Shigella* such as fever, diarrhea, abdominal cramping with increased urgency, we are requesting the following:

- **Consider *Shigella* as an etiology especially for an unhoused patient**
- **Test for *Shigella* by ordering a stool culture (a culture-based diagnostic test) OR if a culture-independent diagnostic test is performed, such as a molecular assay like a PCR, order reflex culture testing when positive for *Shigella***
- **Although most *Shigella* infections are self-limiting and do not require treatment, if antibiotics are being considered, it should be informed by culture-based antimicrobial susceptibility results due to increase in drug-resistant *Shigella* for certain populations. More information on drug resistance can be found [here](#).**

Additional resources on *Shigella* are here:

- <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Shigellosis.aspx>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/shigella/index.html>