



*****HEALTH ADVISORY*****

Dated: January 19, 2012

Subject: Increase in Shigellosis Cases within tradition-observant Jewish community

Cuyahoga County Board of Health is investigating a significant increase in the number of cases of Shigellosis over the past month. Since mid-December, at least 21 confirmed cases have been reported in eastern Cuyahoga County and western Lake County. At this time, the outbreak has been confined to the tradition-observant Jewish community which is consistent with known history of regular outbreaks in Orthodox Jewish communities.

Shigella is a bacterial illness with diarrhea, fever and stomach cramps lasting 5-7 days. The diarrhea is sometimes bloody. Some persons who are infected may have no symptoms at all, but may still pass the shigella bacteria to others. Shigella is present in the stool of a person with the disease and can be spread if the person does not wash their hands well with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after wiping themselves.

Since the best protection against shigella and many common viruses and bacteria is to wash hands frequently with warm water and soap, it is important to take precautions to ensure that liquid soap is available on the Sabbath wherever people wash. Soap should also be available where people perform ritual hand washing. The bacteria are shed in the stool throughout the acute illness and possibly for up to one month. Food served raw or contaminated after cooking by someone infected with the bacteria can be a means of transmission for Shigella. Also, swimming in contaminated water is another way to acquire shigellosis.

Because some people who are infected do not show any symptoms of being infected, the Cuyahoga County Board of Health highly recommends all household members of a confirmed case be tested. In addition, if a person works or attends daycare/preschool and there is a confirmed case, testing is also recommended.

People who think they may be infected with the Shigella should talk to their doctor. For additional information, please contact Epidemiology, Surveillance, and Informatics Services at (216) 201-2080.