

MEMO

TO: North Dakota School Administrators

FROM: Kirby Kruger
State Epidemiologist

RE: Shigellosis in North Dakota

DATE: August 21, 2006

An increase in cases of shigellosis cases have been reported in North Dakota since July 1, 2006. As of August 18, 68 cases of shigellosis have been reported in 7 counties: Benson (9), Burleigh (1), LaMoure (1), McKenzie (2), Ramsey (7), Rolette (47) and Towner (1). The majority of cases have been in children under the age of 10.

The bacteria that cause shigellosis are shed in the stools of infected people, both in those showing symptoms and those not appearing to be ill. Most people who have shigellosis develop diarrhea, fever and stomach cramps starting a day or two after they are exposed to the bacteria. The diarrhea may be bloody. The bacteria are spread by eating or drinking contaminated water or by direct or indirect contact with fecal material from an infected person. Ingestion of only a small amount of bacteria can cause infection; therefore, the bacteria can spread easily from person to person.

If diagnosed with shigellosis, children and staff of schools should stay home until diarrhea has ceased.

Additional steps to prevent the spread of shigellosis include:

- Wash hands with soap thoroughly and frequently, especially after going to the bathroom, after changing diapers and before preparing food or beverages.
- Supervise hand washing of toddlers and small children after they use the toilet.
- Do not prepare food for others if you experience diarrhea or vomiting.
- Do not swim if you have diarrhea. This is especially important for kids in diapers.
- Avoid drinking water from lakes or swimming pools.
- Dispose of soiled diapers properly in a closed-lid garbage can.
- Disinfect diaper changing areas after using them.
- Keep children with diarrhea out of child-care settings.

For more information, contact Kirby Kruger or Julie Goplin, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2378. To report a possible infection, call 800.472.2180. Fact sheets and information about shigellosis are available at www.ndhealth.gov/disease/Shigella/default.htm.