

NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Health Department reports increase in shigellosis cases in Douglas County

The Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department urges residents to be mindful about good hand-washing to help prevent spread of shigellosis, a highly contagious disease that causes diarrhea. When sick, it's important to stay home from work, school and day care.

Since Jan. 31, the Health Department has investigated 12 cases of shigellosis in Douglas County. The county had three cases in 2015 and three cases in 2014.

Shigellosis occurs when people put something in their mouths or swallow something that has come into contact with stool of a person infected with the disease. Exposure to even a tiny amount of contaminated fecal matter — too small to see — can cause infection. This can happen when:

- Touching food or mouth with contaminated hands.
- Eating food contaminated with shigella bacteria.
- Swallowing recreational water that is contaminated.

“Young children are the most likely to get shigellosis because they typically touch all kinds of things without washing their hands,” Director of Clinic Services Kim Ens said. “Illness commonly spreads from young children to family members and then others in the community because it is so contagious.”

Symptoms of shigellosis include: diarrhea, fever, abdominal pain and vomiting. If you have these symptoms, contact your health care provider. Diarrhea usually resolves without antibiotic treatment in five to seven days. Antibiotics are useful for severe cases because they can reduce the duration of symptoms.

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