

November 12, 2025 - *UPDATED with reporting instructions*

Partner Notification in the Cowichan Valley

Re: Multidrug-resistant *Shigella Flexneri*

A cluster of **multidrug-resistant *Shigella flexneri*** has been identified among individuals experiencing unstable housing or with close contact in settings where access to sanitation or hygiene facilities may be limited. Several individuals have required hospitalization, including intensive care. Isolates have been resistant to multiple antibiotics. There are 24 cases identified in Central Island, and 3 cases identified in South Island.

Clinical presentation: Patients may include diarrhea (watery, mucoid, or bloody), fever, nausea, cramps, and tenesmus. Transmission occurs via the fecal-oral route and may involve contaminated food, surfaces, or sexual contact. The infectious dose is low (10-100 organisms) and environmental measures such as hand hygiene and cleaning are critical interventions.

Partner Recommendations: Clinicians are encouraged to **consider Shigellosis in the differential diagnosis** of patients presenting with gastroenteritis, particularly **among individuals experiencing unstable housing** or those with close contact in settings where hygiene or sanitation may be limited.

- Testing:
 - Obtain stool culture for bacteria enteropathogens (Stool C+S). If stool samples are not feasible, Island Health Labs (<https://www.islandhealth.ca/our-services/medical-laboratory-services/medical-laboratory-services>) will accept rectal swabs using the COPAN FecalSwab® for PCR. Indicate rectal swab as the specimen source.
 - Please include “**shigella outbreak**” on the requisition or order.
- Treatment:
 - Consider **empirical therapy** to reduce secondary transmission when isolation is not feasible.
 - Isolates have been resistant to: Ciprofloxacin, Ampicillin, Azithromycin, and TMP/SMX.
 - Suggested antibiotic regimens:
 - Cefixime 400mg PO OD x 5 days; or
 - Ceftriaxone 1g IM x 3 days (dependent on feasibility of implementation).
 - Individuals with moderate to severe illness and suspected shigellosis should be referred to a hospital ED for IV ceftriaxone treatment.
 - Consider empiric treatment of sexual partners.
 - Continue to emphasize rigorous hand hygiene and isolation.
- Reporting: Suspected case should be reported to the Communicable Disease Environmental Health Officers at HPES.CD@islandhealth.ca, phone 250-755-6215 and fax 250-755-3372.

Questions: During business hours, please contact the local MHO office at the number below. After hours, the MHO-on call can be reached at 1-800-204-6166. Please find the most recent MHO newsletters posted at: <https://www.islandhealth.ca/about-us/medical-health-officers/mho-newsletters>.

Thank you for your vigilance and continued partnership in reducing the burden of illness and protecting the health of our community.