

Shigella Bacteria

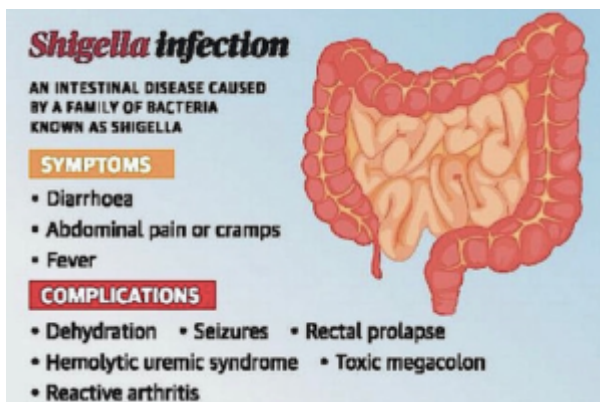
May 6, 2022

In news— Recently, the Kerala health department has identified Shigella bacteria as the cause for the food poisoning incident in Kasaragod, which claimed the life of a 16-year-old girl and led to 30-odd others being admitted to hospital.

What is Shigella bacteria?

- **Shigella is a bacterium that belongs to the enterobacter family, a group of bacteria that reside in the intestine,** not all of which cause disease in humans.
- **It mainly affects the intestine and results in diarrhoea,** sometimes bloody, stomach pain, and fever.
- **The infection spreads easily** as it takes only a small number of bacteria to make someone ill.
- It is a **food- and water-borne infection,** and can happen when someone consumes contaminated food.
- The **disease is easily spread by direct or indirect contact with the excrement of the patient.**
- One can get the infection if he/she swims or takes a bath in contaminated water.
- Infections like typhoid and cholera are also because of contaminated foods.
- **Shigella outbreaks appear to be exacerbated during pregnancy and in children under five years of age,** and in those with weakened immune systems.
- **There are four types of Shigella bacteria that affect humans, they are:**
 1. Shigella sonnei.
 2. Shigella flexneri.
 3. Shigella boydii.
 4. Shigella dysenteriae.
- **The fourth type causes the most severe disease because of the toxin it produces.**

- Infection does not generally kill, unless the patient has a weak immune system or the pathogen is resistant to the antibiotics that are prescribed.
- If the bacteria continue to proliferate in the body even after giving the antibiotics, it will continue to produce toxins, which can then affect the kidney, cause seizures, lead to multi-organ failure, and shock, and even turn fatal.



- The mortality of the infection is less than 1%.
- The measures to prevent a Shigella infection are the same as that of any other food- and water-borne infection.