

# Shigella Bacteria

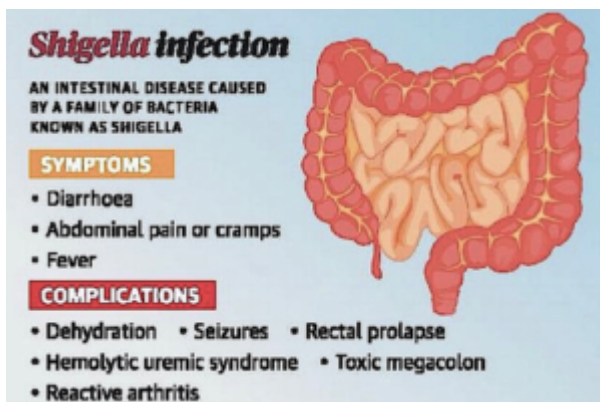
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**In news**— Recently, the Kerala health department has identified Shigella bacteria as the cause for the food poisoning incident in Kasaragod, which claimed the life of a 16-year-old girl and led to 30-odd others being admitted to hospital.

## 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.