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Shigella cases reported in travellers returning from Cape Verde

A food and water hygiene reminder

- **This updates the news item of 23 November 2022**

A reminder of the risks of diarrhoeal illness, including shigellosis, and the importance of food and water hygiene.

Since August 2022, an increased number of shigellosis cases, caused by *Shigella sonnei*, have been reported in travellers returning from Cape Verde [1]. Cases have so far been reported in Belgium (14), the Czech Republic (4), Denmark (2), Finland (9), France (31), Germany (5), Netherlands (47), Norway (1), Portugal (2), Sweden (42), the United Kingdom (UK) (95) and the United States (4).

Based on the available information, many cases are reported to have stayed in the region of Santa Maria on the island Sal, including in all-inclusive hotels [1].

Shigella infection is spread by consuming food or drink contaminated with human faeces containing the bacteria or by swallowing material contaminated by faeces, either via the hands or on objects which have been in contact with faeces [2]. Some gastrointestinal infections, like shigellosis, can also be passed on through direct contact with an infected person, including during sex. Symptoms of shigellosis include diarrhoea (sometimes with blood), fever, loss of appetite, nausea, fatigue, weight loss, stomach cramps, bloating and increased wind [3].

Most cases of shigellosis are in children younger than five years of age, but all ages can be affected [2, 3], there is also a risk for men who have sex with men.

Most people recover within a week, however some individuals may be at greater risk of complications; such as the elderly, the immunosuppressed, those with complex co-morbidities, pregnant women, infants and young children [4].

Advice for travellers

Before you go

Check our [Country Information pages](#) to research general health risks, prevention advice and any vaccine recommendations or malaria advice for your destination.

There is no vaccine to prevent *Shigella* infection.

While you are away

You should ensure that you maintain good [food and water hygiene](#) at all times when abroad even if you are staying in high-end, all-inclusive resorts, including washing your hands regularly.

Choose recently prepared, thoroughly cooked food that is served piping hot.

Avoid fresh unpeeled fruit and salads that have not been washed in safe water.

Avoid swallowing water from ponds, lakes and untreated swimming pools [3].

If you or your partner has had diarrhoea, avoid sexual contact for at least 48 hours [5].

See our [travellers' diarrhoea factsheet](#) for more information.

If you are unwell whilst you are abroad, it is important to drink plenty of fluids and use oral rehydration solutions if necessary to avoid dehydration [3]. Seek medical help early for individuals who are at greater risk of complications, or if symptoms persist for longer than a few days.

When you return

Seek medical attention if you are unwell after returning from your trip. Remember to tell your nurse, doctor, or other healthcare provider about your recent travel.

Advice for health professionals

If a returning traveller presents with gastrointestinal symptoms after foreign travel, consider bacterial infections, including shigellosis as a diagnosis. Testing should be arranged through local microbiology laboratories and confirmed cases reported to the local health protection team. *Shigella* infection can usually be treated with rehydration fluids and antibiotics.

Resources

- [Food and water hygiene](#)
- [Travellers' diarrhoea](#)
- [UK Health Security Agency: Shigella: guidance, data and analysis](#)

References

1. [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. Outbreak of Shigella sonnei in the EU/EEA, the United Kingdom and the United States among travellers returning from Cabo Verde. 17 February 2023. \[Accessed 24 February 2023\]](#)
2. [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. Factsheet about shigellosis. 26 June 2017. \[Accessed 24 February 2023\]](#)
3. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Prevent Shigella infection. 21 March 2022. \[Accessed 24 February 2023\]](#)
4. [TravelHealthPro. Travellers' diarrhoea. 23 August 2019. \[Accessed 24 February 2023\]](#)
5. [NHS. Dysentery. \[Accessed 24 February 2023\]](#)