

# FOCUS

## On Preparedness

### Cherokee County Health Department

#### What You Need To Know About Shigellosis

By: Rhonda Jones

Cherokee County Health Department had a significant increase in the number of shigellosis cases reported during the months of March and April. Shigellosis is an infectious gastrointestinal disease caused by a group of bacteria called shigella. The two most frequently seen forms of Shigella in the U.S are Shigella sonnei, or "group D" and Shigella flexneri, or "group B".

Symptoms of shigellosis usually begin from two to four days after ingestion of the bacteria. Symptoms usually begin with fever, abdominal pain and watery diarrhea. After a day or more the diarrhea may become bloody. Some people may have shigellosis but have few or no symptoms at all and can still pass the infection on to others. Typically, most people are sick for four to

seven days. Once someone has had shigellosis, they are not likely to become infected with that specific type again for at least several years.

Most shigella infections are the result of the bacteria passing from the stools or soiled fingers of one person to the mouth of another person. This is especially likely to happen with younger children, their caregivers, and people  
(Continued on page 2)

"Children with shigellosis should be excluded from school or day care until diarrhea and fever have both subsided."

#### When a Dog Bite Occurs

By: Rhonda Jones

Last February's issue of Focus On Preparedness featured an article on dog bite prevention. Readers were given a number of steps to take in an effort to avoid being bitten by a dog. Unfortunately, these steps may not always work and bites could still occur. To that end, our focus will change from preventions to care and treatment after a dog bite.

When a dog bite occurs, rabies becomes a prime concern. It is very important to obtain a description of the dog and pay attention to where it goes following the attack.

The first step after a dog bite is to immediately wash the

wound with soap and water. An adult will need to determine if the wound will require further care from a doctor or the ER.

The next step is to report the bite to the Local Rabies Authority, even if the bite does not require further medical treatment. If you live in the city limits, call the animal control officer, who can usually be reached via the city police. If you are outside city limits, call the sheriff's office.

If the dog can be caught, it will need to be quarantined for ten days. If the dog is still alive after ten days, it is safe to assume it does not have rabies. If someone feels the need to shoot the dog, it is

extremely important that it not be shot in the head because this may make rabies testing impossible.

If after working with the local animal control or the sheriff's office, a person has questions about a dog bite or the need for shots to prevent rabies, they can contact the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) Zoonosis Control Program. Dr. James Wright is the Regional Veterinarian. Dr. Wright can help determine whether rabies shots are needed and, if so, coordinate care with the victim's physician. Dr. Wright can be reached at DSHS Region 4/5N in Tyler by calling 903-533-5243.

#### Inside this issue:

- Coordinator's Corner 2
- Hot Weather Safety Tips 3
- Handy Hints for Preparedness 3
- Disease 101: Recreational Water Illnesses 4

## Coordinator's Corner

By: Julie Levett

### Pandemic Flu - Why Worry?

#### Reason # 1: Pandemics Kill

Did you know that Hurricane Katrina was **NOT** the worst natural disaster in US history? Even the mildest pandemic in 1968 killed 30,000 Americans. The worst one was in 1918 when more soldiers going to the war died from the flu than from the fighting! The CDC estimated that a pandemic like 1918 happening today will kill 2 million Americans.

- 1918 Spanish Flu Pandemic  
675,000 deaths.
- 2001 September 11 Terrorist Attacks  
3000 deaths
- 2005 Hurricane Katrina  
1500 deaths

#### Reason #2: There Will Be

#### No Vaccines for 6 Months

A pandemic will sweep through your community in 3 months, but a vaccine that will protect you against this flu cannot be made until the pandemic has started and will take at least 6 months.

#### Reason # 3: Pandemics Travel Fast (so does the news!)

In 1918, it took only 20 days for the flu to cross from coast to coast (first case in Boston to first case in San Francisco.) Today, it will spread from anywhere in the world to America at the same speed as flights can arrive! When it starts, everyone will learn about it at the same time. They will all want the same preparedness items as you do. Consider what that means for your family.

#### Reason #4: You're On Your Own

Every community in every country will be affected. It will be worse than Katrina. And it will last 18 months, not 2 days!

#### Reason #5: H5N1 Is a Very Deadly Virus

The H5N1 "bird flu" virus has killed 60% of those it has infected. Of these, the highest death rate of 75% is found for those aged 10 - 19. In comparison, the 1918 virus "only" killed 2% of those infected. In other words, H5N1 will have to become 30 TIMES weaker to cause a pandemic as severe as 1918. WHO experts also tell us that there is no guarantee that this avian flu will become weaker if and when it becomes pandemic flu!

#### Reason #6: Children Are Especially Vulnerable

Children are more frequently infected by influenza than adults. Some viruses like H5N1 appear particularly deadly to the young. Schools are the most densely packed environment you can find anywhere. An average American home would have to be filled with 70 people to create the density you find in schools.

From ReadyMoms.org (a grassroots volunteer initiative)

## Shigellosis Continued

(Continued from page 1) living in crowded conditions. Shigella bacteria are present in the stools of people while they are sick and for one to two weeks afterwards. Shigella can also be acquired from ingesting contaminated food or water or by drinking, playing in or swimming in contaminated water (see page 4, Recreational Water Illnesses). Persons with shigella will usually recover completely, but it may take several months for their bowel habits to return to normal.

Shigellosis can be confirmed with a stool culture and should always be reported to the health department.

Children with shigellosis should be excluded from school or day care until diarrhea and fever have both subsided.

The spread of shigellosis can be stopped by:

- Washing hands with soap and water frequently, especially after going to restroom, after changing diapers, and before preparing foods and beverages.
- Dispose of soiled diapers properly in a closed-lid garbage can.
- Disinfect diaper changing areas after each use.
- Keep children with diarrhea out of school and child care settings

until diarrhea and fever subside.

- Supervise handwashing of toddlers and small children after they use the toilet.
- Do not prepare food or beverages for others while sick with diarrhea.
- Food and water should be kept safe from contamination by human feces.
- See page 4 for methods related to recreational water illnesses.

Antibiotics are available to treat shigellosis, but people with mild infections usually recover without them. Your physician will determine if antibiotics are needed. Anti-

diarrheal agent such as Imodium or Lomotil can make this illness worse and should be avoided. Dehydration is also a concern with this condition and should be treated with fluid replacements.



## Hot Weather Safety Tips

It's May in Texas. That means hot weather will be here very soon. Heat-related deaths and illnesses are preventable, yet each year hundreds of Americans die from extreme heat.

People suffer heat-related illnesses when their bodies are not able to properly cool themselves. The body normally cools itself by sweating, but under some conditions, sweating just isn't enough. During high humidity sweat will not evaporate as quickly, preventing the body from releasing heat quickly. Other factors that can affect the body's ability to cool itself are age (the elderly and the very young), obesity, fever, dehydration, heart disease, mental illness, poor circulation, sunburn, some prescription drugs, and alcohol use.

The following measures will help protect you during times of extreme heat.

- **Drink plenty of fluids.**
- **Replace salt and minerals.** Sports beverages can replace salt and minerals lost due to sweating. If you are on a low salt diet, talk to your doctor before drinking a sports beverage.
- **Wear appropriate clothing and sunscreen.** Choose lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing. Use sun screen of SPF 15 or higher.
- **Schedule outdoor activities in the morning and evening hours.**
- **Pace yourself.** If exertion in the heat makes your heart pound and leaves you gasping for breath, **STOP** all activity, get into a cool or at least a shady place, and rest.
- **Stay cool indoors.** If your home does not have a air

conditioner, try going to a public building that is air conditioned. Take a cool shower or bath. Use your stove and oven less to keep your home cooler.

- **Use a buddy system.** When working in the heat monitor the condition of your co-workers and have someone do the same for you. If you know someone over the age of 65, call and check on them at least twice a day during a heat wave.

- **Monitor those at risk.**
  1. Infants/children up to 4
  2. Persons 65 and older
  3. Persons who are overweight
  4. People who overexert during work or exercise
  5. People who are physically ill, especially with heart disease or high blood pressure, or who take certain medications, such as for depression, insomnia, or poor

circulation.

- **NEVER LEAVE CHILDREN OR PETS IN A PARKED CAR.** Even with the windows cracked, temperatures can rise almost 20° F within the first 10 minutes. When leaving your car, check to be sure everyone is out of the car. Do not overlook any children who have fallen asleep in the car.



## Handy Hints for Preparedness

### FIRST AID HINTS

**Nosebleeds:** Don't lean back. Do sit upright, lean forward and pinch just below the nasal bone for 5 - 10 minutes. After the bleeding has stopped, don't blow your nose or bend over. If bleeding persists more than 15 minutes, go to the ER.

**Knocked-out tooth:** Don't scrub the tooth hard. A gentle rinse is okay. Do put the tooth in milk and go straight to the ER. There is a chance the tooth can be reimplanted.

**Burns:** Don't apply ice, butter, or any type of grease to burns. Don't cover with blanket or towel as loose fibers might stick to skin. Don't break any blisters or pull off clothing stuck to the skin. For mild burns, gently wash and apply antibiotic ointment. Go directly to the ER for burns to the eyes, mouth, genital area, any burn that covers an area larger than your hand, or any burn that blisters or is followed by a fever.

### ARE YOU READY - OR NOT?

**Disasters happen. Be prepared!**

**For a simple step-by-step online guide to build your family's preparedness plan go to**

**[www.texasprepares.org](http://www.texasprepares.org)**

**"Confidence and courage come through preparation and practice"**

Author unknown

### FIRST AID HINTS

**Electrical burns:** Do go directly to the ER. Even if no damage is evident, an electrical burn can cause a serious injury deeper inside the body.

**Bleeding:** Don't use tourniquets! You could cause permanent tissue damage. Do apply steady pressure to the wound with a clean towel or gauze sponge and wrap the wound securely. Go to the ER if the bleeding doesn't stop, if the wound is gaping, or if the wound was caused by an animal bite. To prevent shock, keep the victim warm.

**Amputated finger:** Don't try to preserve the loose part by placing it directly on ice. Do wrap the severed part in damp gauze (saline is the ideal wetting solution), place it in a watertight bag, and place the bag on ice. Apply pressure to stop the bleeding. Cover with a clean, dry cloth.



## Cherokee County Health Department

593 North Main  
Rusk, TX 75785

Phone: 903-683-6142

Fax: 903-683-3109

Email: [jlevett@texashan.org](mailto:jlevett@texashan.org)  
[rjones@texashan.org](mailto:rjones@texashan.org)

### On-line Resources

- [www.cchdtexas.org](http://www.cchdtexas.org)
- [www.cherokeeflu.com](http://www.cherokeeflu.com)
- [www.dshs.state.tx.us](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us)
- [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
- [www.texasprepares.org](http://www.texasprepares.org)

### Public Health Preparedness Team

Judith Beck, RN

CCHD Director

Mary Bone, MD

CCHD Medical Director

Julie Levett, BS, RRT

Public Health Preparedness Coordinator

Rhonda Jones, LVN

Disease Surveillance/PHIN Administrator

Charlotte Sanders, RS

Sanitarian

## Disease 101: Recreational Water Illnesses

As the weather warms up, it's time to start pulling out the swimsuits to enjoy outdoor water activities. The week of May 19 - 25 marks the fourth annual **Recreational Water Illness (RWI) Prevention Week**. The goal of this year's recognition is to highlight the importance of healthy swimming behaviors to prevent RWIs.

RWIs are illnesses that are spread by swallowing, breathing, or having contact with contaminated water from pools, spas, lakes, rivers, or oceans. RWIs can cause a variety of symptoms including gastrointestinal, skin, ear, eye, neurological, and wound infections. The most commonly reported RWIs are diarrheal illnesses caused by germs such as cryptosporidium, giardia, shigella, norovirus, and E.coli.

Most outbreaks of diarrhea related to RWIs are related to fecal contamination of the water by someone who is ill with diarrhea. Tiny amounts of fecal matter are rinsed off all swimmers' bottoms as they swim through the water. Infectious diarrhea can contain hundreds of millions to a billion germs in a single fecal accident. Even though swimming pools have filtration systems and disinfection of the water, swimmers can still be exposed to germs during the time it takes for the water to be recycled through the filters or for the chlorine to work. In addition, cryptosporidium is resistant to chlorine that is used to disinfect pools.

How can you protect yourself and your family and still enjoy outdoor water activities? By following a few simple actions

you reduce your risk of becoming sick with RWIs.

- Do not swim when you have diarrhea.
- Do not swallow pool water or get water in your mouth.
- Shower before swimming (children too). Everyone has invisible amounts of fecal matter on their bottoms that ends up in the pool.
- Wash your hands after using the toilet or change a diaper.
- Take children on frequent bathroom breaks or change diapers often.
- Change children's diapers in the restroom not at poolside.
- Be observant. Pool and spa sides should be smooth, tiles should not be sticky or slippery.

- There should be little or no odor in a pool or spa. A strong chemical smell indicates a maintenance problem.

For more information about RWI and water safety go to the following website:  
[www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming/rwi\\_prevention\\_week.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming/rwi_prevention_week.htm)

