



# County of Santa Cruz

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## HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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## Press Release

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For Immediate Release

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### **Shigella Outbreak Reported in County of Santa Cruz in Individuals Experiencing Homelessness**

**Santa Cruz, CA.-** The County of Santa Cruz Public Health is monitoring an outbreak of shigellosis primarily impacting individuals experiencing homelessness with at least 27 cases, (16 lab confirmed, 11 under investigation), since late January 2024.

The County has been working with the City of Santa Cruz, the Sheriff's Office, Homeless Persons Health Project (HHPH), medical providers, hospitals and with homeless service providers to ensure good hygienic precautions, identify any additional cases, and connect ill individuals to treatment.

Shigellosis is an infection caused by bacteria called *Shigella* that can easily spread from person to person and make people sick. The most common symptoms of shigellosis include diarrhea, stomach pain/cramps, and fever. These symptoms usually start 1-2 days after infection with *Shigella* and last about a week although a person can shed the bacteria for 4 weeks after feeling better.

People can get *Shigella* infection by:

- **Getting *Shigella* bacteria on their hands** and then touching their food or mouth. This can happen after:

- Touching surfaces contaminated with *Shigella* from stool from a sick person.
- **Eating food** that was prepared by someone who has a *Shigella* infection (shigellosis).
- **Swallowing recreational water** (for example, lake or river water) while swimming or drinking water that is contaminated with the *Shigella* bacteria.
- Changing the diaper of a sick child or caring for a sick person.

“At this time the risk to the broader community is low, but people can protect themselves from *Shigella* by washing their hands with soap and water carefully and frequently, especially after using the bathroom, after changing diapers, and before preparing and consuming foods or beverages,” said Dr. Lisa Hernandez, Santa Cruz County Health Officer.

The infection is diagnosed with stool testing. Most people will recover fully without antibiotic treatment, though individuals with poor immune systems can develop life-threatening disease. If you have symptoms that resemble shigellosis, contact your primary care physician for assistance.

For more information on *Shigella* visit [https://bit.ly/shigella\\_SCZ](https://bit.ly/shigella_SCZ) or <https://www.cdc.gov/shigella/general-information.html>.

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