

Shigellosis

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | Health

Why in News?

An outbreak of shigellosis, or shigella infection, has been reported in Kerala, with one death and 15 cases across the State this month.

- **Shigellosis** - It is a highly contagious intestinal infection that causes acute diarrhoea.
- **Caused by the** - Shigella bacteria, one of the leading bacterial causes of diarrhoea worldwide.
- Humans are the only natural reservoir of the Shigella bacteria.
- **Transmission** - It is transmitted through direct, close contact with infected individuals, through the faecal-oral route and through sexual contact.
- It can also spread through contaminated food and water or contact with faeces of an infected person, for instance, while changing a diaper.
- **Risk factors**
 - Children under the age of five,
 - having a weakened immune system,
 - travelling to an area with unsafe food or water,
 - living in crowded areas or in long-term care facilities or group settings/homes and experiencing homelessness.
- **Symptoms**
 - **Incubation period** - Generally 1-4 days
 - **Common symptoms** - Diarrhoea, which can be bloody or with mucus, lasting 3 days or more.
 - **Other symptoms** - Includes stomach cramps, vomiting, fever, tenesmus (feeling of needing to pass stool even when bowels are empty)
 - Symptoms usually last for five to seven days.
- **Global Status** - The estimated annual incidence of shigellosis is 188 million cases & approximately 164,000 cases result in death, a significant number of these being children under five.
- **Treatment**
 - **Mild cases** - It is typically self-limiting (means symptoms resolve themselves), supportive care at home (hydration, rest, ORS for children)
 - **Severe cases** - Diagnosis would involve a physical examination and testing of stool samples to check for the infection.
- Medicines, including antibiotics, may be prescribed for a serious infection.
- **No Vaccine** - There is currently no approved vaccine for shigellosis, though several

candidates are undergoing clinical trials.

- **Important** - It is important to consult a doctor before taking any medicine, as some diarrhoea medicines are not recommended for a shigella infection and for children.
- **Complications** - Dehydration is one major complication, especially with children, and in severe loss of fluids can be dangerous, even leading to death.
- Some children may experience seizures, though it is unclear if it is the infection or the fever that causes the seizures.
- **Less common complications** - Include the infection entering the bloodstream, reactive arthritis (inflammation of the joints), rectal prolapse, and haemolytic uremic syndrome.

Reference

[The Hindu | Shigellosis](#)

