

## **FACT SHEET**

### **Shigella**

#### **Common clinical features**

Typically causes bloody diarrhoea, but the most common species found in the UK (*Shigella sonnei*) causes a mild illness. Species found outside the UK, particularly in the tropics, can cause severe dysentery with blood mucus and pus in the stool sample. Gastrointestinal complications may occur and occasionally haemolytic uraemic syndrome.

#### **Incubation period**

1 - 7 days.

#### **Where is it found?**

Human gastrointestinal tract, sewage and contaminated water.

#### **How is it acquired by affected individuals?**

Usually transmitted by the faecal oral route from cases with diarrhoea, in households and institutions, mainly those containing young children. Occasionally spread by sewage contamination of food or water.

#### **How does the laboratory confirm the diagnosis?**

Culture of the bacteria from a faecal sample on selective media. Results are usually available in 2 days but confirmation of the particular type of Shigella may take several days.

#### **How is it treated?**

Rehydration and antibiotics.