

NEW MEXICO HEALTH ALERT NETWORK (HAN) ALERT

Floroquinolone-resistant *Shigella* outbreak in Bernalillo County, primarily among people experiencing homelessness

September 9, 2024

Background: The New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) has identified an outbreak of *Shigella flexneri* occurring in Bernalillo County. Three out of four cases are experiencing homelessness. Tested samples have genomic patterns which confer resistance to fluoroquinolones, the class of antibiotics commonly used to treat *Shigella* infections. This strain of *Shigella* has previously caused prolonged outbreaks in New Mexico (www.nmhealth.org/publication/view/general/8111/, www.nmhealth.org/publication/view/general/7318/).

Shigellosis is characterized by diarrhea, sometimes with fever, malaise, nausea, vomiting and cramps. Stools typically contain blood and mucus, although mild infections consisting only of watery diarrhea may also occur. Illness is usually self-limited, lasting an average of 4-7 days although severe infections may occur in young children, the elderly, and in persons with poor nutritional status. Outbreaks commonly occur in conditions of crowding or poor sanitation.

Shigella is found in the stool (feces) of infected people and infected people can continue to shed *Shigella* bacilli for up to four weeks after symptoms have resolved. People become infected by direct or indirect fecal-oral transmission from an infected person, via:

- Person to person contact
- Contact with a contaminated object
- Eating food or drinking liquids prepared by infected food handlers
- Sexual contact

Recommendations for Clinicians: Antimicrobial therapy is effective for shortening the duration of diarrhea and eradicating the organism from feces. Given the observed drug resistance in this outbreak, clinicians should perform antimicrobial susceptibility testing to ensure appropriate treatment for patients with *Shigella* infection. Clinicians should treat people experiencing homelessness with azithromycin and may consider either azithromycin or Ciprofloxacin in other populations. Treatment should be used in patients with severe symptoms. For patients with mild illness, treatment may be indicated to prevent the spread of the organism. Antimicrobial therapy should be administered for five days. Use of anti-motility or antidiarrheal medications are discouraged in adults.

Additional Resources: For more information on *Shigella*, please visit the NMDOH *Shigella* webpage or the CDC *Shigella* website.

([Shigella \(nmhealth.org\)](http://Shigella.nmhealth.org))

([Shigella – Shigellosis | Shigella – Shigellosis | CDC](#))

New Mexico Health Alert Network: To register for the NM Health Alert Network, please visit the following site <https://nm.readyop.com/fs/4cjZ/10b2> Please fill out the registration form completely and click Submit at the bottom of the page, to begin receiving Important health alerts, advisories, and updates.

Please Note that our system also utilizes text messaging to notify members of important health information. Due to FCC Regulation changes that are designed to decrease the amount of unwanted spam text messages sent each year to citizens, please save, this phone number **(855) 596-1810** as the **“New Mexico Health Alert Network”** default phone number for your account used for text messages on the mobile device(s) you register with us.