



# Wyoming Department of Education

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## MEMORANDUM NO. 2007-017

**TO:** School District Superintendents  
Principals  
School Nurses

**FROM:** Gerald Maas, Ph.D.   
Director, Health & Safety Unit

**DATE:** January 12, 2007

**SUBJECT:** Community-wide Outbreak of Shigellosis in  
Fremont County School Districts

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### IMPORTANT HEALTH INFORMATION—PLEASE CIRCULATE

We have been advised by the Wyoming Department of Health (WDH) that over the past few months, and continuing today, there has been a large increase in the number of diarrhea illnesses in Fremont County caused by the bacteria Shigella. As of January 4, 2007, the Wyoming Department of Health has received reports of 90 cases of Shigellosis in Fremont County, and the number of cases continues to increase. Most of these cases to date have been in school-age children.

At the request of the WDH, we are notifying all districts of this outbreak because of potential contact with students/staff participating in activities among different schools. **It is important that school officials have a heightened awareness of diarrheal illnesses among students and staff and, therefore, make an extra effort to help limit the potential spread to others in the school setting. Please make sure all school staff are educated about and follow the control and prevention measures discussed below.**

Infection with Shigella often results in diarrhea that may also be accompanied by fever, stomach cramps, vomiting, and bloody stools. The illness is generally spread by people, objects, or food and water that have

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become contaminated by fecal (stool) material. However, the illness is very easily transmitted and can be spread even without obviously visible contamination.

In order to help control the outbreak and reduce transmission of this illness, the WDH strongly suggests that **all students and school staff with diarrhea should stay home from school and all other group activities until the diarrhea has completely resolved itself** (unless the diarrhea is known to be caused by a pre-existing, non-infectious condition). A health care provider can help make this distinction if needed. If diarrhea persists for three or more days, contains blood, or is accompanied by a fever, the WDH recommends consultation with a healthcare provider. He/She can determine if the illness is due to an infectious condition such as Shigella.

A separate letter addressing additional measures required by food service entities, including school cafeterias, has been sent from the Wyoming Department of Agriculture. Please make sure your food service personnel have been made aware of these special requirements. If you have not received this letter, or have questions, call the Department of Agriculture, Consumer Health Services, 307-777-7211 or 307-777-6587.

Frequent and careful hand washing with warm water and soap, especially after using the bathroom, can help stop the spread of the illness. **Please emphasize the importance of hand washing with your students and staff and ensure that adequate supplies of hand hygiene materials are on hand and readily available for use.**

We are attaching a memo that can be sent to parents of students attending schools in Fremont County. This memo can be used for informational purposes for the other school districts.

If you have additional questions, please contact the Wyoming Department of Health at 1-877-996-9000.

Attachment

**Date:** January 12, 2007

**To:** Parents of Children Attending Fremont County Schools

**From:** Wyoming Department of Health and  
Wyoming Department of Education

**Subject:** Community-Wide Outbreak of Shigellosis in Fremont  
County

Over the past few months, and continuing today, there has been a large increase in the number of diarrhea illnesses in Fremont County caused by the bacteria Shigella. Infection with Shigella often results in diarrhea that may also be accompanied by fever, stomach cramps, vomiting, and bloody stools.

The illness is generally spread by people, objects, or food and water that have become contaminated by fecal (stool) material. However, the illness is very easily spread and can be spread even without obviously visible contamination. Therefore, it is very important that all members of the community take special care to avoid spreading the infection to others.

In order to help control the outbreak and reduce transmission of this illness, **all students with diarrhea should stay home from school and all other group activities until the diarrhea has completely resolved** (unless the diarrhea is known to be caused by a pre-existing, non-infectious condition). Your health care provider can help you make this distinction if needed. If the diarrhea lasts for three or more days, contains blood, or is accompanied by a fever, we recommend you consult your health care provider. He/She can determine if the illness is due to an infectious condition such as Shigella. If it is determined your child has the Shigella infection, please let your school nurse know this.

Frequent and careful hand washing with warm water and soap, especially after using the bathroom, can help stop the spread of the illness. Please emphasize the importance of hand washing with your child. Children who might not practice adequate hand washing are at an increased risk of becoming infected and may play an important role in passing the infection on to teachers, other family members, and classmates.

If you have additional questions, please contact the Wyoming Department of Health at 1-877-996-9000.