

CRYPTOSPORIDIOSIS

PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

What is Cryptosporidiosis?

*Cryptosporidiosis is a diarrheal disease caused by microscopic parasites (*Cryptosporidium hominis* parvum and others) present in the intestinal tract. Once an animal or person is infected, the parasite lives in the intestine and passes in the stool. The parasite can survive outside the body for long periods of time and is very resistant to chlorine-based disinfectants.*

How is it spread?

Cryptosporidium is found in soil, food, water, or surfaces that have been contaminated with infected human or animal feces. If a person swallows the parasite, they become infected. The parasite can be spread by:

- swallowing something that has come into contact with feces of a person or animal infected with *Cryptosporidium*.
- swallowing recreational water contaminated with *Cryptosporidium* from swimming pools, hot tubs, jacuzzis, fountains, lakes, rivers, springs, ponds, or streams. Note: *Cryptosporidium* can survive for days in swimming pools with adequate chlorine levels.
- eating uncooked food contaminated with *Cryptosporidium*. Thoroughly wash all vegetables and fruits with clean, safe water.
- swallowing *Cryptosporidium* picked up from contaminated surfaces like bathroom fixtures, changing tables, diaper pails, or toys.

How is it treated?

Cryptosporidiosis is diagnosed in a laboratory by examining a stool sample. Most people with healthy immune systems will recover without treatment. Drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration if you have diarrhea. Rapid loss of fluids from diarrhea may be especially life threatening to infants; parents should talk to their health care provider about fluid replacement therapy options. There is a medication available to treat diarrhea in children over 12 months of age and adults.

How can we prevent Cryptosporidiosis?

- Practice good handwashing after toileting or diaper changing, before eating or preparing food.
- Do not drink untreated water or swallow recreational water.
- Infected persons should not use public recreational waters, pools, lakes, ponds, etc. until two weeks after symptoms resolve.
- Wash dishwasher safe toys in dishwasher with dry or final rinse cycle 113 °F for 20 minutes, 122 °F for 5 minutes, or 162 °F for one minute. Cloth toys can be washed and dried in dryer at the highest temperature for 20 minutes.
- Children with diarrhea should be excluded from day care until diarrhea stops.

SYMPTOMS OF CRYPTOSPORIDIOSIS

- Watery diarrhea
- Stomach cramps or pain
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Fever
- Dehydration
- Weight loss

Symptoms generally begin 1 to 12 days (average 7 days) after infection and usually last about 1 to 2 weeks.

Some people will have no symptoms at all.

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