



Cryptosporidiosis

What is Cryptosporidiosis?

Cryptosporidium is a parasite found in water. When this parasite is accidentally swallowed it can cause a diarrheal illness commonly referred to as Cryptosporidiosis. *Cryptosporidium* germs can be found on hands, in food, water, soil, or surfaces that have been contaminated with the stool of an infected person or animal.

How is it spread?

Cryptosporidiosis is commonly spread by swallowing the parasite unknowingly through hands, food, or water that has been contaminated with the stool (poop) of an infected person. Pets and farm animals can become infected with *Cryptosporidium*. Not properly washing your hands after handling or cleaning up after these animals may expose you to this parasite.

What are the symptoms?

Frequent watery diarrhea along with stomach cramps is common. Some people experience fever, loss of appetite, nausea, and vomiting. These symptoms usually start 1-12 days after you have been exposed to the parasite. In healthy people, including children, the illness could last up to a month. You may be infected and experience no symptoms at all. Relapses can also occur after a time when symptoms have stopped. People with underlying medical conditions, especially those with HIV, may experience more severe symptoms which can lead to serious complications.

What is the treatment for Cryptosporidiosis?

Most healthy people recover with simple oral rehydration and without having to take any medication. Consult your health care provider for treatment recommendations.

How do I protect myself and others?

- It is important to wash your hands after using the toilet, before preparing or eating meals, after changing diapers, and after being in close contact with animals.
- Avoid swallowing potentially contaminated recreational water (e.g. swimming pools, wading pools, lakes).
- Do not drink raw or unpasteurized milk and fruit juices.

- Do not drink untreated water from shallow wells, lakes, rivers, springs, ponds, and streams. The concentration of chlorine used in routine water treatment does not kill *Cryptosporidium*. If you are unsure of the safety of your drinking water, bring your water to a rapid rolling boil for at least one minute before use to destroy the parasite, or use an approved filtration system that will effectively remove it.
- Wash and/or peel all raw vegetables and fruits before eating. Use safe, uncontaminated water to wash all foods that are to be eaten raw.
- Cook raw meats thoroughly.
- Good personal hygiene will reduce the risk for infection for some sexual activities.
- To prevent travel related illnesses avoid eating uncooked foods where you are unsure of water treatment and sanitation systems. Eat foods that have been thoroughly cooked and are still hot. Safe beverages include tea and coffee made with boiled water and carbonated bottled beverages with no ice. Avoid tap water, or ice made from tap water.

Is there anything special I need to know?

If you are diagnosed with Cryptosporidiosis, and you provide services to others, particularly seniors or children, you should not go to work while you are experiencing symptoms. Your employer will determine when it is safe for you to return.

Protect others by not swimming if you are experiencing diarrhea. Avoid public recreational waters (pool, spa, hot tub, wave pool, splash pad, water park) for 2 weeks after your symptoms have gone away. It is possible that even after you are feeling better you will still be shedding the parasite in your stool (poop).

To prevent spreading the disease to people around you always practice good hand washing and personal hygiene.

For information call Infectious Diseases: ext. 8809.