

Fact Sheet

Cryptosporidiosis

What is Cryptosporidiosis?

Cryptosporidiosis is a disease caused by a parasite called *Cryptosporidium parvum*. The parasite lives in the intestine of people and animals and is passed in their stool. The parasite is protected by an outer shell that makes it hard to kill.

What are the symptoms?

Some people will have no symptoms at all. When symptoms are present, they usually begin 1 to 10 days after getting the parasite. The most common symptoms are diarrhea, stomach pain, upset stomach and a fever.

Who can get it?

Anyone who swallows the parasite can get sick. The most common people to get sick are:

- Children in day care.
- People who take care of others with Cryptosporidiosis.
- People who travel to other countries.
- People who swallow water while swimming in pools, ponds, streams, rivers and lakes.

How does a person get it?

The parasite is found in food, water or dirt that has human or animal stool with *Cryptosporidium* in it. A person becomes sick when they eat food or drink water that has the parasite in it. The parasite can be passed to others during sex as well.

What is the treatment for it?

Most people will feel better without taking medicines. People with other illnesses (e.g., those with HIV infection or cancer patients taking certain medicines) could have more serious symptoms. Talk to your healthcare provider about whether medicine is needed.

How can it be prevented?

- Wash hands thoroughly after using the toilet and before eating or touching food.
- Wash all fruits and vegetables with clean water, especially those that will not be cooked.
- Avoid swallowing recreational water (e.g., pools, hot tubs, ponds, lakes or rivers).
- When drinking water from lakes or rivers, try to boil it first to make sure it is safe.
- Do not go swimming in pools if you have diarrhea, and do not bring diapered children in the pool if they have diarrhea.
- Follow safe food and water guidelines when traveling in other countries.