

Fact Sheet

Giardiasis

What is Giardiasis?

Giardiasis (or *Giardia*) is an illness caused by *Giardia lamblia*, a parasite that lives in the intestine of people and animals.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms usually begin 1 to 4 weeks after infection and include diarrhea, loose or watery stool, stomach cramps or upset stomach. Symptoms may lead to weight loss and dehydration. Some people with Giardiasis have no symptoms.

Who can get it?

Anyone can get it, but those more likely to get it are:

- People who take care of others with Giardiasis.
- Children in daycare.
- People who drink or accidentally swallow water that is not clean (such as hikers, swimmers and those on the land).

How does a person get it?

The parasite is passed in the stool of a person, wild animal or pet that already has *Giardia*. It can be passed in the stool for weeks to months, even in those without symptoms. It may also be found in food, water or dirt that has human or animal stool with *Giardia* in it.

What is the treatment for it?

There is medicine available to treat *Giardia*. See your healthcare provider for the right medicine to treat your sickness.

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.