

CRYPTOSPORIDIOSIS

Reportable to local or state health department

Consult the health department before posting/distributing Parent/Guardian fact sheet.

CAUSE	<i>Cryptosporidium</i> , a parasite.
SYMPTOMS	Frequent watery diarrhea, vomiting, and low-grade fever that lasts for several days are the most common symptoms. Other symptoms include stomach cramps, loss of appetite, and weight loss. Illness usually lasts from 7 to 10 days, but may last up to 30 days. Infected persons may have mild symptoms or may not have any symptoms at all. In persons with weakened immune systems, it can cause very serious illness and even result in death.
SPREAD	<p><i>Cryptosporidium</i> parasites leave the body through the stool of an infected person and enter another person when hands, food, or objects (such as toys) contaminated with stool are placed in the mouth. Spread can occur when people do not wash their hands after using the toilet or changing diapers. Spread can occur through contact with infected pets and farm animals, particularly cattle.</p> <p>Outbreaks of cryptosporidiosis have occurred as a result of eating food and drinking water contaminated by the parasite. Waterborne outbreaks have occurred both as a result of drinking contaminated water and from swimming or playing in contaminated pools, lakes, or fountains.</p>
INCUBATION	It takes 2 to 14 days, usually about 7 days, from the time a person is exposed until symptoms begin.
CONTAGIOUS PERIOD	As long as <i>Cryptosporidium</i> is present in the stool, a person can pass the germs on to other people. <i>Cryptosporidium</i> can be present in stool for at least 2 weeks after symptoms have stopped.
EXCLUSION	<p><u>Childcare</u>: Until diarrhea has stopped.</p> <p><u>School</u>: None, unless the child is not feeling well and/or has diarrhea and needs to use the bathroom frequently. Exclusion may be necessary during outbreaks.</p> <p>Everyone with <i>Cryptosporidium</i> should not use swimming beaches, pools, water parks, spas, or hot tubs for 2 weeks after diarrhea has stopped.</p> <p>Staff with <i>Cryptosporidium</i> may be restricted from working in food service. Call your local health department to see if these restrictions apply.</p>
DIAGNOSIS	Recommend parents/guardians call their healthcare provider if their child has symptoms. There is a lab test to detect <i>Cryptosporidium</i> in the stool.

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TREATMENT An antiparasitic drug has been approved for treatment of children and adults with healthy immune systems; however, the majority of healthy persons who are infected with *Cryptosporidium* get better without any specific treatment. Vomiting and diarrhea may lead to dehydration, which may be a medical emergency. Ask a healthcare provider how to prevent dehydration.

PREVENTION/CONTROL

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after using the toilet, changing diapers, and before preparing or eating food. **Thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.** Staff should closely monitor handwashing of all children after children have used the bathroom or have been diapered.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water immediately after handling pets and touching farm animals, particularly cattle.
- DO NOT swallow water when swimming in lakes, swimming pools, hot tubs or fountains. *Cryptosporidium* can survive for days in swimming pools with adequate chlorine levels.
- Clean and disinfect diapering area and potty chairs after each use and bathroom toilets, sinks, and toys at least daily and when soiled. (See pgs 34-36.)

Disinfecting Solutions

Bleach solutions are not effective for inactivating the *Cryptosporidium* parasite. Mechanically cleaning surfaces by scrubbing with soap or detergent and water will help reduce germs. Contact your local health department for disinfection recommendations if an outbreak of cryptosporidiosis occurs.

For more information, call Hennepin County HSPHD-Epidemiology at (612) 543-5230 or call your local health department.