

Fact Sheet: Cryptosporidiosis

What is Cryptosporidiosis?

Cryptosporidiosis (Crypto) is a diarrheal disease caused by microscopic parasites that can live in the intestines of humans and animals and are passed in the stool of an infected person or animal. Crypto is recognized as one of the most common causes of waterborne disease (recreational and drinking water) in humans in the United States.

Signs and Symptoms

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

Symptoms usually start 2 to 10 days after infection and last for 1 to 2 weeks. Some people may not show symptoms. For those who develop them, symptoms may go in cycles in which you may seem to get better for a few days, then feel worse again before the illness ends.

If you are a food service worker, a health care worker, or a childcare worker, report your illness to your supervisor and do not work until your medical provider says it is OK.

Cryptosporidium is very resilient. It can survive for days in chlorinated pools!

How is it spread?

- By putting something in your mouth or accidentally swallowing, something that has been exposed to the stool of an infected person or animal.
- By swallowing contaminated recreational water. Recreational water is water in swimming pools, hot tubs, Jacuzzis, fountains, lakes, rivers, springs, ponds, or streams. Recreational water can be contaminated with sewage or feces from humans or animals.
- By eating uncooked food or drinking unpasteurized/raw apple cider or milk contaminated with *Cryptosporidium*.

Treatment

- For those with healthy immune systems, the infection will usually resolve itself. However, individuals must make sure to drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration.
- Children and those with compromised immune systems are at particular risk for dehydration. Consult with your health care provider regarding appropriate measures.
- Medication is available for severe cases.

Prevention

- Wash your hands often, especially before preparing food and eating, after animal contact, and after using the bathroom or changing diapers.
- Protect others by not swimming if you are experiencing diarrhea (this is essential for children in diapers). If diagnosed with cryptosporidiosis, do not swim for at least 2 weeks after diarrhea stops.
- Do not consume unfiltered water or uncooked meat.

This fact sheet is for informational purposes and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care professional. For more information about communicable disease, speak to your health care provider or call the Ingham County Health Department at (517)-887-4308.

Visit our website at <http://hd.ingham.org>

or the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention at: www.cdc.gov

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