

Cryptosporidium

What is *Cryptosporidium*?

Cryptosporidium is a parasite known to cause illness that affects the stomach. The parasite can make both humans and animals sick .

What are the symptoms of *Cryptosporidium*?

Symptoms begin 2-10 days (usually 7 days) after ingesting the parasite. It is not uncommon for symptoms to come and go for a few weeks.

Symptoms include:

- Frequent diarrhea (often watery) – can lead to severe dehydration
- Stomach pain and cramping
- Some may experience fever, nausea, and vomiting

How do I get *Cryptosporidium*?

People must swallow or eat the parasite to become infected. *Cryptosporidium* is usually spread through the following:

- Drinking or swallowing water from lakes, streams, rivers, ponds.
- Drinking or swallowing water from swimming pools or hot tubs.

Cryptosporidium is a very hardy parasite and can survive in treated water.



- People who become infected will have the parasite in their stool (poop). Ill people who do not wash their hands after using the bathroom or changing diapers can spread the parasite to others.
- Cattle and some pets, including dogs and cats, can be infected and spread the parasite to you through their poop.
- *Cryptosporidium* is NOT spread from one person to another through coughing, sneezing, sharing drinks, hugging, or kissing. However, contact with an infected person's poop during sexual activity can spread the parasite to others.



What is the treatment for *Cryptosporidium*?

- For most people, symptoms will go away on their own within 1-3 weeks.
- It is important to drink extra fluids to avoid dehydration.
- People with long-term illnesses (i.e. AIDS/ HIV patients) may not be able to clear the parasite. These symptoms could be life threatening.
- Call your doctor if symptoms do not go away or become worse.

(over)

How do I prevent *Cryptosporidium*?

- Only drink water from lakes, streams, rivers, etc. if you have boiled (for one minute) or filtered first. Since the parasite is very small, be sure to use a filter that will remove *Cryptosporidium*.
- Do not swallow water from swimming pools or spas.
- Wash hands before preparing and serving food.
- Always wash your hands after using the bathroom.
- Always wash hands after changing diapers and toilet training.



If you think you have *Cryptosporidium*

- Do not prepare food for others.
- Contact your health care provider.
- Stay home from work. Especially if your job involves handling food, caring for small children, or working with patients in a healthcare setting.
- Children who have *Cryptosporidium* should not go to child care settings—especially if they have diarrhea.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

- *Cryptosporidium* is very hardy and can live on surfaces for weeks if not cleaned properly.
- Many types of bleach-based household cleaners will not kill the parasite.
- Spray surfaces with 3% hydrogen peroxide and allow surfaces to dry completely without wiping.
- Dunk objects (i.e. toys) in boiling water for 1 minute or 3% hydrogen peroxide for 10 minutes.

IMPORTANT!

- *Cryptosporidium* can still be shed in poop even after diarrhea has stopped.
- **Do not swim until at least 2 weeks after diarrhea stops.**



Questions?

Contact Tri-County Health
Department at 720-200-9200 or
visit us at: www.tchd.org