

Cryptosporidiosis General Information

What is cryptosporidiosis?

Cryptosporidiosis is a disease caused by a parasite called *Cryptosporidium parvum*. The disease is also called “Crypto.” The parasite lives in the intestines of humans and animals and is passed in their stool. The parasite is protected by an outer shell that allows it to live outside the body for long periods of time. The outer shell also makes it very resistant to chlorine.

Who can get cryptosporidiosis?

Anyone who accidentally swallows the parasite can get infected. The parasite is found in food, water or soil that has been contaminated with infected human or animal stool.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms include diarrhea, stomach cramps, upset stomach and possibly a slight fever. The symptoms usually begin 1 to 12 days after being infected.

What is the treatment?

There is no effective treatment for cryptosporidiosis. Most people with a healthy immune system will recover on their own. If you have a weak immune system (such as people with HIV/AIDS or cancer patients who are taking certain drugs), you could have more severe symptoms. Your healthcare provider can give you advice.

How can you prevent cryptosporidiosis?

Ways to prevent the spread of the parasite include:

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after using the toilet and before eating or handling food.
- Avoid swallowing recreational water (pools, hot tubs, lakes or rivers).
- Keep diapered children or anyone with diarrhea out of swimming pools.
- Avoid using ice or drinking untreated water when travelling in countries where the water supply might be unsafe.
- Use uncontaminated water to wash all vegetables and fruits before eating.
- Avoid drinking water from lakes, streams and rivers when camping or hiking.