

Cryptosporidiosis

Fact sheet

Cryptosporidiosis is a disease. You can get it by swallowing the *Cryptosporidium* parasite. The disease can give you diarrhoea and stomach cramps. Contact your doctor if you have a weakened immune system and you get symptoms.

What is cryptosporidiosis?

- Cryptosporidiosis is a disease caused by a parasite called *Cryptosporidium*. The parasite infects the intestine.
- *Cryptosporidium* infections have been found in humans and in a variety of farm, pet and native animals.

What are the symptoms of cryptosporidiosis?

- The most common symptoms are watery diarrhoea and stomach cramps.
- Other symptoms may include fever, nausea, vomiting and loss of appetite. You may also have no symptoms.
- The first symptoms appear between 1-12 days after you get infected. Most people usually have symptoms after 7 days.
- Your symptoms may last days to weeks. They may also come and go.
- If you have a weakened immune system, your symptoms may be more severe (worse) and last for months. You should contact your doctor if you get symptoms.

How is cryptosporidiosis spread?

Cryptosporidium is found in the faeces (poo or bowel motions) of infected humans and animals. You can get infected if you swallow the parasite.

Activities that spread the disease include:

- person-to-person contact, particularly in families and among small children (for example, in childcare centres)
- swimming in contaminated pools, spas or recreational water parks
- touching infected animals or their manure (poo)
- certain types of sexual activity, such as oral-anal sex

- drinking contaminated water, such as from untreated bores and wells
- drinking unpasteurised milk or eating dairy products
- eating food such as raw fruit, vegetables or salads.

You are most infectious (able to infect someone else) when you have diarrhoea. However, you can still infect someone for several days after your symptoms have stopped.

Who is at risk of cryptosporidiosis?

You are more likely to get infected with *Cryptosporidium* if you:

- are in close contact with others who have cryptosporidiosis
- are a child who attends preschool, playgroup, early childhood or day care centres, especially with other children in nappies
- are a parent or carer of infected children
- are a childcare worker
- swim and swallow even small amounts of water in recreational swimming pools, spas or water parks
- drink untreated water (for example, from rivers or lakes)
- visit developing countries
- work with animals
- are a man who has sex with men.

You are at risk of more serious disease if you have a weakened immune system. You should contact your doctor if you get symptoms.

How is cryptosporidiosis prevented?

Cryptosporidium survives for many days, even in chlorinated pools.

To avoid catching cryptosporidiosis:

- Wash your hands well with soap and water for 20 seconds. Do this every time after you: use the toilet, touch animals or their manure (poo), change nappies, work in the garden and before preparing food or drinks.
- Do not drink untreated water (for example, from lakes or streams). Boil water by bringing it to a rolling boil (large bubbles and a lot of movement in the pot). This is hot enough to kill *Cryptosporidium*.
- Do not eat or drink unpasteurised milk or dairy products.
- Do not swallow water when swimming.
- Do not swim in natural waters during and for at least three days after heavy rain. Natural waters include rivers, creeks and dams.
- Do not swim at ocean beaches during and for at least one day after heavy rain. Check [Beachwatch NSW](#) for information about recreational water quality at swim sites monitored across NSW.
- Avoid contact with animals and places that could have infected faeces (poo) if you have a weakened immune system. For example, ask someone to clean up after your pet/s. If you must do this, use disposable gloves.

If you visit a developing country, you should follow the above steps and also:

- avoid uncooked foods, including fruit and vegetables, unless you can peel them yourself
- not drink untreated water, including ice and drinks mixed with water. Drink bottled or boiled water instead
- avoid eating food from street stalls.

How do I avoid spreading cryptosporidiosis?

If you have cryptosporidiosis you should:

- not swim for at least two weeks after your diarrhoea has stopped
- not share towels or linen for at least two weeks after your diarrhoea has stopped
- not share, touch or prepare food that other people may eat for at least 48 hours after your diarrhoea has stopped.

If your child has diarrhoea, keep them home from preschool, playgroup, early childhood or day care. Do this until 24 hours after their diarrhoea has completely stopped.

How is cryptosporidiosis diagnosed?

Your doctor will check if you have cryptosporidiosis through a stool test. Your doctor will organise this for you.

A stool test finds germs such as parasites in your poo that can make you sick.

How is cryptosporidiosis treated?

There is no specific treatment or medicine.

You should drink lots of fluids such as water. This will help you not become dehydrated (when you don't have enough liquids in your body).

Information for schools and childcare centres

Children with diarrhoea should be kept home and not attend preschool, playgroup, early childhood or day care. Do this until 24 hours after their diarrhoea has completely stopped.