



PUBLIC FACT SHEET

CRYPTOSPORIDIOSIS

What is cryptosporidiosis?

Cryptosporidiosis is an intestinal disease caused by a microscopic parasite that can be passed in the stool of an infected human or animal. Both the disease and the parasite are referred to as “crypto”. The parasite is protected by an outer shell that allows it to survive outside the body for long periods of time and makes it very resistant to chlorine disinfection.

How is crypto spread?

Crypto may be spread through the following ways:

- swallowing anything that has come in contact with the stool of a person or animal infected with crypto
- swallowing water contaminated with crypto from pools, hot tubs, jacuzzis, lakes, rivers, springs, ponds, or streams contaminated with sewage or feces
- eating undercooked food contaminated with crypto

What are possible symptoms?

Symptoms of crypto usually appear 2 – 10 days after exposure, and usually last about 2 weeks. Symptoms often go in cycles, during which time a person feels better, then worse every few weeks until the disease ends. The parasite will usually be passed in the stool for another 2 months, during which it can be transmitted to others.

Symptoms may include:

- upset stomach
- stomach cramps
- diarrhea
- slight fever

Some people may have no symptoms at all. Others who have weakened immune systems are at risk for more serious disease. Examples of people with weakened immune systems include: HIV/AIDS patients, cancer patients, organ transplant patients, and those with chronic underlying diseases.

How is cryptosporidiosis diagnosed?

Cryptosporidiosis is diagnosed by stool samples. Several stool samples may be required over a several day period.

What is the treatment for crypto?

There is no specific antibiotic treatment for cryptosporidiosis. Most people with good immune systems will recover on their own. Those in poor health or with underlying immune problems are at higher risk and may require hospitalization. Anti-diarrhea medication may be used on occasion, but only after consultation with a health care provider.

How can cryptosporidiosis be prevented?

- wash your hands with soap and water after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and before preparing food and drinks
- avoid water or food that may be contaminated
- avoid drinking water from lakes, rivers, springs, ponds, or streams unless chemically treated
- boil untreated water for at least one minute to kill the cryptosporidiosis parasite
- avoid swimming in pools for at least 2 weeks after diarrhea stops if you have cryptosporidiosis

For more information on cryptosporidiosis contact:

Ottawa County Health Department
www.miOttawa.org

Center for Disease Control and Prevention
http://www.bt.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/list_crp.tm
Phone: (888) 342-2437