

#### What is *Cryptosporidium*?

*Cryptosporidium* is a protozoan parasite (a tiny organism). It causes an infection called cryptosporidiosis that can affect both people and cattle. The most common symptom is watery diarrhoea. *Cryptosporidium* is found in lakes, streams, rivers, untreated water and sometimes in swimming pools.

#### Who gets *Cryptosporidium* infections?

Anyone can get a *Cryptosporidium* infection, but certain groups are more likely to get the infection:

- young children between 1 and 5 years old;
- people who care for, or work with, children.

#### How do you get infected with *Cryptosporidium*?

You can become infected through contact with someone else who has the illness or contact with their contaminated items (for example when changing a nappy).

It is also possible to get infected through contact with farm animals or household pets; or by swimming in, or drinking, contaminated water.

Occasionally you can become infected by eating and drinking contaminated food or drink.

#### How can you avoid getting infected with *Cryptosporidium*?

Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water:

- before preparing and eating food;
- after handling raw food;
- after going to the toilet or changing a baby's nappy;

- after contact with pets and other animals;
- after working in the garden.

Always wash and/or peel fruits and vegetables before eating them.

Do not drink untreated water from lakes, rivers or streams. Avoid swallowing water when swimming in lakes and swimming pools.

When travelling to countries where standards of water hygiene are poor always drink bottled water. Never add ice to your drinks and don't brush your teeth with tap water.

You should pay special attention to hygiene during farm visits, wash your hands after any contact with animals, and eat only in designated areas.

#### How can you prevent others in your household becoming infected with *Cryptosporidium*?

Everyone in the house should wash their hands thoroughly with soap and warm water after going to the toilet, after handling soiled clothing or bedding and before preparing/eating food.

Wash the infected person's laundry separately and on the hottest cycle of the washing machine for that particular fabric.

Clean toilet seats, toilet bowls, flush handles, taps and wash hand basins after use with detergent and hot water, followed by a household disinfectant.

Everyone in the house should have their own towel and they should not use anyone else's.

The infected person should not prepare or serve food for others.

[www.publichealth.hscni.net](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net)

This leaflet provides information on cryptosporidium including what it is, how it is spread, common symptoms and how to prevent spreading the illness to others.

## Details

Format

2 page, A4

Target group

Adults and children

## Downloads

**Attachment**

**Size**

[Cryptosporidium Factsheet.pdf](#) 68.43 KB

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