

What is Cryptosporidium?

Cryptosporidiosis is a disease caused by a tiny parasite, known as *Cryptosporidium*, that can cause infection in the gut. *Cryptosporidium* can be found in lakes, streams, rivers, untreated water and sometimes in swimming pools. It can also be found in soil or food, on surfaces, or on dirty hands that have been contaminated by infected people or animals.

What are the symptoms and how long do they last?

The most common symptom is watery diarrhoea.

Other possible symptoms include stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, and fever. Symptoms usually start within 2 to 10 days (average seven days) after being exposed.

Most people who have a healthy immune system will get better within 1 to 2 weeks. Some people may have prolonged diarrhoea, and some may have no symptoms at all.

Who can get *Cryptosporidium*?

Anyone can get a *Cryptosporidium* infection, but it is most common in:

- children under five years old;
- people who care for children;
- people who have contact with farm animals;
- People who swallow untreated or contaminated water while camping or swimming.

How do you get infected with *Cryptosporidium*?

Cryptosporidium lives in the gut of infected humans or animals. An infected person or animal has *Cryptosporidium* parasites in their faeces (poo) while they are unwell, and for up to several weeks after symptoms stop.

You can become infected through contact with a person or animal who has the illness, or through contact with contaminated surfaces or objects.

It is also possible to get infected by swimming in, or drinking, contaminated water. This may include rivers, ponds, lakes, and swimming pools, as the parasite is not killed by chlorine.

Sometimes contaminated food, such as unwashed vegetables or raw milk, can pass on the parasite too.

What can you do to prevent *Cryptosporidium* infection?

Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water at these key times:

- before preparing and eating food;
- after handling raw food;
- after using or cleaning the toilet;
- after attending anyone with diarrhoea or vomiting;
- after touching anything contaminated by diarrhoea or vomiting;
- after changing a baby's nappy;
- after contact with pets or livestock;
- after working in the garden.

Gastrointestinal infections factsheets

These factsheets contain information on various gastrointestinal infections.

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Details

Format

A4, PDF only

Target group

General Public

Downloads

Attachment	Size
Collecting a stool sample factsheet.pdf	132.4 KB
Cryptosporidium factsheet.pdf	155.9 KB
Giardiasis factsheet.pdf	174.76 KB
Hepatitis A factsheet.pdf	136.29 KB
Hepatitis E factsheet.pdf	137.19 KB
Hepatitis E questionnaire.pdf	132.33 KB
Reducing the spread of gastroenteritis.pdf	134.69 KB
Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli.pdf	167.3 KB
Shigellosis factsheet.pdf	155.8 KB
Typhoid fever factsheet.pdf	154.54 KB

Tags

- [Cryptosporidium; Giardiasis; Hepatitis A; Hepatitis E; Gastroenteritis; Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli; Shigellosis; Typhoid; e.coli](#)

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