

## What is giardiasis?

Giardiasis is caused by a tiny parasite, called giardia lamblia, that can cause an infection in your gut.

Common symptoms include watery diarrhoea, tummy cramps, nausea, vomiting, and loss of appetite. Fever usually starts 7-10 days after you have been exposed to giardia. Most people will get better within 2-3 weeks, although some people may have prolonged diarrhoea,

## Who can get giardiasis?

Anyone can get giardiasis. You can become infected after coming into contact with the bug. This can be through:

- contact with someone who has the illness, or touching items they have been in contact with while infected;
- swimming in contaminated water;
- drinking water that has been contaminated by infected people or animals (can be associated with travel to places where water quality is poor);
- eating food that has been washed in contaminated water or handled by someone with giardiasis;
- having sex with someone infected with giardiasis (especially unprotected anal or oral sex).

## What can you do to prevent giardiasis?

Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water, especially 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.

You should also:

- avoid drinking untreated water from lakes, rivers or streams;
- if you are visiting countries where water hygiene is poor, choose bottled water and never add ice to your drinks;
- always wash and/or peel fruit and vegetables before eating them.

## How can I protect others in my household?

Here are some actions you can take to prevent the spread of infection:

- everyone in the household 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;
- the infected person should not prepare or serve food for others;
- 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;
- wash the infected person's laundry separately at high temperatures.

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.

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

## How is giardiasis treated?

Giardiasis is one of the few infections of the digestive system that can be successfully treated with antibiotics. If you have confirmed giardiasis in a stool (poo) sample, your doctor

can prescribe an appropriate antibiotic for you. It is important to complete this treatment, to prevent the risk of long-term (chronic) giardiasis.

It is advised that you also drink plenty of fluids to remain well hydrated, as diarrhoea or vomiting can lead to dehydration. If you feel sick and have difficulty keeping fluids down, try taking small sips of fluid frequently.

Always contact your doctor or seek medical advice if any of the following apply:

- your symptoms are severe or do not improve after a few days;
- you have a high temperature (fever) of 38°C (100.4°F) or over;
- you have symptoms of severe dehydration, such as sunken eyes and passing small quantities of urine, or have dark/strong smelling urine;
- you have a baby with symptoms;
- you have an immune system that is not working properly.

## Do you need to stay off school or work?

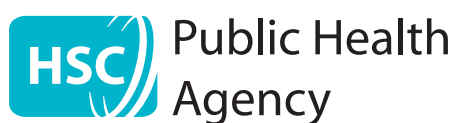
Yes. While you are ill and have symptoms, you are infectious.

You should not return to work or school until you have been free from diarrhoea for at least 48 hours.

You should tell your employer you have had giardiasis if you work with vulnerable groups such as the elderly, the young, those in poor health, or if you handle food.

Children should not attend school/childcare or play with other children until they are fully recovered and symptom free for at least 48 hours.

It is also important that you avoid swimming in a pool for two weeks after your symptoms stop, due to the risk of contamination of the pool environment and onward spread.



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