

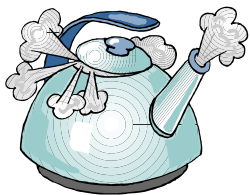
Should I worry about spreading the infections to others?

Both Giardiasis and Cryptosporidiosis are highly contagious. Infected individuals should follow these guidelines to avoid spreading the disease:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, especially after using the toilet, changing diapers and before eating and preparing food.
- Do not swim in recreational water for at least two weeks after the diarrhea stops.
- Avoid fecal exposure during sexual activity.
- Avoid close contact with anyone who has a weakened immune system.

How can I ensure that my water is safe?

All municipal drinking water supplies are routinely monitored for bacteria and other important health parameters to assist health officials to determine the overall quality of drinking water. If your water comes from a well or surface



water, water treatment devices must be installed to disinfect and filter water before it is safe to drink. In the outdoors, water should be brought to a rolling boil for one minute before it is used for drinking, brushing teeth, rinsing dentures or contact lenses,

making ice cubes, washing uncooked fruits and vegetables, washing dishes and mixing with foods such as infant formula and frozen fruit juices.

For more information on water treatment devices, see:

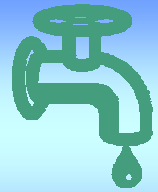
- ***SAFE TO DRINK: Water Treatment Devices***

or contact a Public Health Inspector at the Northwestern Health Unit.

SAFE TO DRINK

Cryptosporidium and

Giardia in Drinking Water



What are Cryptosporidium and Giardia?

Giardia lamblia and *Cryptosporidium parvum* are microscopic parasites that can be found in water. When ingested, they germinate, reproduce and cause illness. *Giardia* causes an intestinal illness called Giardiasis or “beaver fever”. *Cryptosporidium* is responsible for a similar illness called Cryptosporidiosis.

Who is at a greater risk?

Although anybody can be infected with Giardia or Cryptosporidium, symptoms are more severe and long lasting in young children, the elderly and in immunocompromised individuals such as people infected with HIV/AIDS, people being treated for cancer, transplant patients, or others taking medications that suppress the immune system.



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What are the symptoms of Giardiasis?

Symptoms may include diarrhea, stomach cramps, bloating, severe flatulence, weight loss and fatigue. Bowel movements may be loose, mucousy and greasy. Some people may carry *Giardia* without showing any symptoms



but symptoms typically appear within five to 25 days after contact. However, seven to ten days is the most common. Diarrhea usually lasts several weeks, but can reoccur or become chronic.

What are the symptoms of Cryptosporidiosis?

Symptoms usually start two to ten days after ingestion of the parasite. Not everyone who is infected will feel sick. If symptoms do occur, they may include watery diarrhea, cramps, nausea and vomiting, and mild fever. Symptoms may come and go, but usually resolve after 20 days.

How are these infections treated?

Giardia is usually cleared from healthy people within a month without treatment. Anti-parasitic drugs are available and are particularly helpful to immunocompromised people in whom the illness could otherwise develop into a persistent state.

There are no approved drugs to fight *Cryptosporidium* although many are now being tested. The illness will usually disappear from healthy people within a month. Anti-diarrheal drugs and rehydration therapy may be used if diarrhea becomes severe.

How can I reduce the risk of infections from Giardia and Cryptosporidium?

Thorough handwashing is the best prevention.

- Make sure hands are washed properly after using the toilet, handling diapers, pets or livestock and before handling foods.
- Avoid drinking water directly from rivers, creeks, lakes and whenever you are uncertain whether the water has been properly treated.
- Avoid consuming unpasteurized milk products.
- When traveling, camping or hiking, or if a “boil water” order has been issued, bring the water to a rolling boil for one full minute.

How can drinking water become contaminated with these parasites?

Giardia cysts are often found in feces from humans, beaver, muskrats and dogs. Cattle appear to be the primary source of *Cryptosporidium* oocysts, although they have also been found in humans and other animals. Drinking water sources become contaminated when feces containing the parasites are deposited or flushed into water. If the water treatment is inadequate, drinking water may contain sufficient numbers of parasites to cause illness. Other sources include direct exposure to feces of infected humans and animals, eating contaminated food and accidental ingestion of contaminated recreational water.

