

Cryptosporidiosis

Cryptosporidiosis is an infection of the bowel caused by the parasite *Cryptosporidium*.

The main symptom is watery diarrhoea which occurs with stomach cramps. Fever, vomiting and loss of appetite occur less commonly. People with normal immune systems may have symptoms which usually last for about one to two weeks. People with severe immune suppression, particularly those with late stage AIDS, may have severe, prolonged diarrhoea.

The infection is diagnosed by examining a specimen of faeces under a microscope.

This parasite may be transmitted person-to-person. Infection is also spread directly, by drinking or swimming in contaminated water, eating uncooked food (fruits and vegetables) contaminated with *Cryptosporidium* or indirectly, when hands, objects and surfaces are contaminated with faeces of infected people or animals (cows and other domestic animals). The parasite must be taken in by the mouth to cause infection.

Incubation period

(time between becoming infected and developing symptoms)

1 – 12 days.

Infectious period

(time during which an infected person can infect others)

As soon as the infected person develops symptoms and for up to several weeks after the disappearance of symptoms.

Treatment

For those with normal immune systems, specific treatment is not required.

If there is diarrhoea, drink lots of fluids.

There is no available effective treatment for reducing diarrhoea in people with immune suppression.

Control of spread

- > Exclude from child care, preschool, school and work until there has been no diarrhoea for 24 hours. If working in a child care, health care or commercial food setting, the exclusion period should be 48 hours.

Control of spread cont.

- > Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water; always wash hands before handling or eating food, after using the toilet or when changing nappies, even if you are wearing gloves.
- > Do not consume untreated ice or drinking water when travelling in countries where the water supply might be unsafe.
- > Avoid eating uncooked foods when travelling in countries with minimal water treatment and sanitation systems.
- > Wash and/or peel all raw fruits and vegetables before eating.
- > Do not swallow recreational water (pools, lakes, rivers, springs, ponds and streams).
- > People who have diarrhoea should not use public swimming pools for 14 days after the symptoms have stopped.
- > Avoid touching farm animals, especially young calves and lambs.
- > Filtration of water in treatment plants is the most effective barrier to transmission of *Cryptosporidium* in water. It is highly resistant to chemical disinfectants used to purify drinking water.
- > People with weakened immune systems, particularly people with HIV and AIDS, should consider additional strategies to avoid infection:
 - Drink only treated water. There is no general advice to avoid drinking treated mains water. However, if you wish to take extra precautions, you may wish to boil your water before drinking.



***Cryptosporidium* infection is a notifiable disease**

- > Hand Hygiene
- > Keeping Areas Clean
- > Collecting a Faecal Sample