



# Fact Sheet: Giardiasis

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## What is giardiasis disease?

Giardiasis is a disease caused by a microscopic parasite that causes diarrheal illness. The *Giardia* parasite gets into the intestines, and lays eggs, which are then passed in feces (stools) via a bowel movement. The parasite can live outside the body for weeks or months.

## What are the symptoms of the Giardiasis?

- Diarrhea or frequent loose stools that are pale and greasy
- Gas
- Abdominal cramps
- Bloating
- Upset stomach or nausea
- Weight loss

Some people may not experience any symptoms. However, those who do have symptoms, usually experience them 1-3 weeks after becoming infected with the parasite. Symptoms can last 3-25 days or longer with an average of 7-10 days.

## How is it spread?

- By coming in contact with the parasite from an infected person who did not wash their hands after having a bowel movement.
- Not washing hands after changing soiled diapers of an infected child.
- Drinking contaminated water from untreated water sources such as lakes and streams.
- Swallowing water while swimming or playing in water contaminated with *Giardia* organisms.

- Eating uncooked food that contains the parasite.

## How is Giardiasis treated?

People who think they have been infected, should see their primary care doctor, and take all medicine as prescribed. All household members and sexual contacts of an infected person should be checked by their doctor for *Giardia*.

## People with Giardiasis should:

- Not prepare food.
- Practice good hygiene.
- Wash hands after using the bathroom.
- Wash toys that children may put in their mouths.
- Dispose of diapers in a tied plastic bag and place inside a closed garbage can.
- Clean bathrooms with bleach after each use (1 tablespoon of bleach for every 1 gallon of water).
- Prevent contact with feces during sex.
- Stay well hydrated to avoid dehydration, especially infants and pregnant women.
- Stay off from work and away from school until symptoms have disappeared and clearance have been granted by primary care physician.

Detroit Health Department  
3245 E. Jefferson Suite 100  
Detroit, Michigan 48207  
313-876-4000  
[www.detroitmi.gov/health](http://www.detroitmi.gov/health)