



Fact Sheet: Giardiasis

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information, contact your health care provider or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov.

What is giardiasis disease?

Giardiasis is a diarrheal disease caused by a microscopic parasite *Giardia*. 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 even 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, but generally have 2 to 5 loose stools per day. However, those who do have symptoms, usually experience them 1-3 weeks after becoming infected with the parasite. Symptoms lasts 3- 25 days or longer with an average of 7-10 days.

How is it spread?

- By close contact with an infected person, who did not wash their hands after having a bowel movement.
- Sexual activity where people have contact with feces
- Transferring *Giardia* germs from contaminated surfaces such as any door handles i.e., bathroom, diaper pails, changing tables, toys, inanimate objects into your mouth
- 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 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 when infected
- Store, clean and prepare fruits and vegetables properly
- Practice good hygiene
- Wash hands, after using the bathroom and before preparing food and eating
- 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
- Avoid swallowing water from swimming pools, lakes, rivers and properly treat water when possible