



## Hawaii State Department of Health

### Disease Investigation Branch

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## Cryptosporidiosis

### What is cryptosporidiosis?

Cryptosporidiosis is a diarrheal disease caused by a very small intestinal parasite, *Cryptosporidium*. Once an animal or person is infected, the parasite lives in the intestine and passes in the stool. The parasite is able to survive outside the body for long periods of time and is very resistant to chlorine-based disinfectants.

### How do you get it?

*Cryptosporidium* lives in the intestine of infected humans or animals. Millions of *Cryptosporidium* parasites can be released in a bowel movement from an infected human or animal. *Cryptosporidium* is found in soil, food, water, or surfaces that have been contaminated with infected human or animal feces. A person becomes infected by swallowing *Cryptosporidium* parasites. You cannot become infected through contact with blood.

### What are the symptoms?

The most common symptom of cryptosporidiosis is watery diarrhea. Other symptoms include stomach cramps or pain, dehydration, nausea, vomiting, fever, or weight loss. Some people will have no symptoms at all. While the small intestine is the site most commonly affected, *Cryptosporidium* infections could possibly affect other areas of the digestive or respiratory tract.

### When do symptoms start?

The symptoms usually start 7 days after swallowing *Cryptosporidium* parasites, but the onset can range from 1-12 days.

### What is the treatment?

Medicine can be prescribed by a physician to treat the diarrhea. People who are in poor health or who have a weakened immune system are at higher risk for more severe and more prolonged illness. Consult with your health care provider for more information.

### Should a person with cryptosporidiosis stay home from school or work?

Yes. Any child with diarrhea should stay out of day care until the diarrhea stops. Also, people with diarrhea who

work as food handlers or take direct care of patients should stay home from work until well. Infected people with no symptoms who work as food handlers, child-care and health care workers, should get permission from their doctor or the Health Department before returning to work. A person with cryptosporidiosis may be able to spread the disease for several weeks after the symptoms have gone away. Therefore, careful hand washing is very important upon return to work.

### How can you keep from getting it?

There is no vaccine to prevent cryptosporidiosis.

Always practice good hygiene by washing hands thoroughly and frequently with soap and water. It is especially important after handling animals, changing diapers, using the toilet, and before making or eating food.

Avoid water that may be contaminated. Do not swallow recreational water (water in swimming pools, hot tubs, Jacuzzis, fountains, etc.); do not drink untreated water from shallow wells, lakes, rivers, springs, ponds, and streams; do not use or consume untreated ice or tap water when traveling in countries where the water supply might be unsafe.

Avoid food that may be contaminated. Use safe, uncontaminated water to wash all food that is to be eaten raw; avoid eating uncooked foods when traveling in countries with minimal water treatment and sanitation systems.

Take extra care when traveling. If you travel to developing nations, you may be at a greater risk for *Cryptosporidium* infection because of poorer water treatment and food sanitation. Warnings about food, drinks, and swimming are even more important when visiting developing countries. Avoid food and drinks, in particular raw fruits and vegetables, tap water, or ice made from tap water,

Avoid fecal exposure during sexual activity.

For more information, please see the CDC's website at <http://www.cdc.gov/crypto/>

