

What is cryptosporidiosis?

Cryptosporidiosis is a disease caused by *Cryptosporidium*, or *Crypto*, a group of one-celled parasites. The parasites can live in the intestine of humans and animals, and are passed in the stool (feces) of an infected person or animal. A protective outer shell allows them to survive outside of the body for long periods of time and makes them very resistant to chlorine-based disinfectants.

Who is at risk for cryptosporidiosis?

People of all ages are at risk, but it is especially common in child care settings.

What are the symptoms of cryptosporidiosis?

Symptoms of cryptosporidiosis may include watery diarrhea, stomach cramps or pain, dehydration, nausea, vomiting and fever. Symptoms can come and go for up to 30 days, but usually subside in less. In some cases, people infected with cryptosporidiosis may not experience any symptoms. Others may have severe diarrhea and lose weight. People who have weakened immune systems are at higher risk for more severe and prolonged illness.

How soon do symptoms appear?

The first symptoms of cryptosporidiosis may appear two to 10 days after a person becomes infected.

How is cryptosporidiosis spread?

People get cryptosporidiosis by accidentally swallowing the parasite. *Crypto* can be found in soil, food, water, or surfaces that have been contaminated with feces from infected humans or animals. You can get cryptosporidiosis by drinking contaminated water or eating contaminated food. Cryptosporidiosis can also be spread through contaminated hands. Hands can become contaminated through a variety of activities, such as touching surfaces that have been contaminated by stool from an infected person or animal, changing diapers, caring for an infected person, or handling an infected cow or calf.

When and for how long is a person able to spread the disease?

A person can shed the parasite for several weeks after symptoms have resolved.

How is a person diagnosed?

Diagnosis is based on identification of *Crypto* in a stool sample.

What is the treatment?

Most people who have healthy immune systems will usually get better without any specific treatment, but prescription medications are available if necessary. Rehydration with fluids or oral rehydration solutions is important to avoid dehydration.

Does past infection make a person immune?

No.

Should children or others be excluded from child care, school, work or other activities if they have cryptosporidiosis?

A child should be excluded from child care if he/she has:

- Vomited two or more times within the previous 24 hours, unless the vomiting is determined to be caused by a noninfectious condition and the child is not in danger of dehydration
- Diarrhea, if stool is not contained in the diaper or if diarrhea frequency exceeds two or more stools above normal for that child
- A fever or is unable to participate and the staff determines that they cannot care for the child without compromising their ability to care for the health and safety of the other children in the group

A child or an adult should be excluded from school or work if diarrhea cannot be contained. An adult who prepares or handles food should be excluded from work until 24 hours after diarrhea resolves or they provide written medical documentation from a health practitioner that they are not contagious.

What can be done to prevent the spread of cryptosporidiosis?

- Frequently wash your hands, especially after toilet visits, changing diapers and before eating or preparing food.
- Wash hands carefully after handling farm animals or pets.
- Be careful when swimming in lakes, rivers or pools and when using a hot tub. Avoid swallowing the water.
- If you have cryptosporidiosis, do not swim in recreational water for at least two weeks after the diarrhea stops. You can pass the parasite in your stool and contaminate water for several weeks after your symptoms have ended. You do not even need to have a fecal accident in the water; immersion in the water may be enough for contamination to occur.
- Drink safe water. Do not drink water from lakes, rivers, springs, ponds, streams or shallow wells or when traveling in countries where the drinking water supply may be unsafe. Boil drinking water for one minute if you are unsure of source.

Additional Information:

For additional information, call the North Dakota Department of Health at 800.472.2180.

This disease is a reportable condition. As mandated by North Dakota law, any incidence of this disease shall be reported to the North Dakota Department of Health.

Resources:

1. *Red Book: 2015 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases*. 30th ed. [Children in Out-Of-Home Care]. Kimberlin, DW; Brady, MT; Jackson, MA; Long, SS. American Academy of Pediatrics. 2015: 132-151.
2. *Red Book: 2015 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases*. 30th ed. [Cryptosporidiosis]. Kimberlin, DW; Brady, MT; Jackson, MA; Long, SS. American Academy of Pediatrics. 2015: 312-315.
3. Heymann, D. L. (2015). *Control of Communicable Diseases Manual, 20th Edition*. Cryptosporidiosis. American Public Health Association. 2015: 136-139.
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2015). Cryptosporidium. www.cdc.gov/parasites/crypto/.
5. North Dakota Administrative Code. (2016). 33-33-04-28.9-11. www.legis.nd.gov/information/acdata/pdf/33-33-04.pdf.