

GIARDIA FACT SHEET

What is *giardia* infection?

Giardia infection (giardiasis) is a disease of the intestines caused by the parasite called *Giardia lamblia*.

What are the symptoms of *giardia* infections?

- Chronic diarrhea
- Stomach cramps
- Bloating & gas
- Greasy stools

Symptoms can begin between 3 days to 3 weeks (usually 7 to 14 days) or longer after contact with *Giardia*. Many people with *Giardia* do not have symptoms. A person with giardiasis can transfer the infection as long as he has the *Giardia* parasites.

How is *Giardia* infection spread?

Person to person spread happens by hand to mouth transfer of the *Giardia* parasites from the stool of the infected person. You can get *Giardia* by eating foods or drinking water that has been contaminated with stools of infected humans or animals. Open waters like lakes, rivers, ponds or streams may have *Giardia* from stools of infected people and animals. Chlorination of swimming pools and spas does not kill *Giardia*. Another way to get infected is through anal sex.

Who can get *Giardia* infection?

Anyone can get *Giardia* infection. Persons at higher risk for *Giardia* infection are:

- children in child care centers and adults who attend to these children
- persons in close contact with a *Giardia*-infected person
- travelers to foreign countries where food and water may be contaminated with *Giardia*
- men having sex with other men.

What is the treatment for *Giardia* infection?

Talk with your health care provider regarding appropriate treatment for *Giardia* infection. If a family member or close contact has the same symptoms, consult with your health care provider or the local health department for recommendations. If you are a foodhandler, healthcare and/or child care provider, call Contra Costa Public Health at (925) 313-6740 for specific recommendations.

How is *Giardia* infection prevented?

- Wash hands before and after handling food, and before eating.
- Wash hands after using the bathroom and/or after handling diapers.
- Avoid drinking water from unfiltered sources, such as streams, rivers, lakes, ponds.
- When in a foreign country, drink bottled water that has been treated and filtered.
- Keep children with diarrhea out of swimming pools. Have diapered children wear tight diaper covers in swimming or wading pools.

For more information please contact Contra Costa Public Health at 925-313-6740 and visit our website at <http://cchealth.org/giardiasis/>
CDC: www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/giardiasis