



Indiana State Department of Health

Epidemiology Resource Center

Quick Facts

About...Giardiasis

What is giardiasis?

Giardiasis (gee-are-DYE-a-sis) is a diarrheal illness caused by a microscopic parasite called *Giardia*.

What are the symptoms of giardiasis?

- Diarrhea
- Gas
- Greasy stools that tend to float
- Bloating
- Stomach cramps
- Nausea
- Constipation
- Weight loss
- Dehydration

Symptoms usually begin within 1 to 3 weeks and may last 2-6 weeks. People with *Giardia* may still make others sick even if they feel well.

How is giardiasis spread?

The parasite passed in the stool and people become infected by having contact with stool from an infected person. This includes:

- Consuming food or drinks prepared by a sick person.
- Drinking unfiltered water.
- Cleaning up stool or vomit.
- Touching a contaminated surface or object.
- Having close contact with an ill household member or in a daycare or school.
- Having sexual contact that involves contact with stool.

Who is at risk for getting giardiasis?

Anyone can become ill, but young children, senior adults, pregnant women, and immune suppressed individuals (such as patients on cancer drugs and with organ transplants) are at high risk for illness.

How do I know if I have giardiasis?

A person having diarrhea lasting more than 24 hours should see his or her doctor. The doctor may collect stool samples to test for *Giardia*.

How is giardiasis treated?

Treatment may not be needed. In some cases, a doctor may prescribe medicine. Drinking fluids will reduce dehydration.

How is giardiasis prevented?

In general, to prevent giardiasis follow the guidelines below:

- Wash hands with soap and water frequently. Especially
 - after using the restroom,
 - after assisting someone with diarrhea and/or vomiting,
 - after swimming,
 - before, during, and after food preparation.
- Clean food preparation work surfaces, equipment, and utensils with soap and water before, during, and after food preparation.
- Separate raw and cooked foods.
- Do not consume unpasteurized dairy products or juices.
- Wash all produce before eating raw or cooking.
- Use treated water for washing, cooking, and drinking.
- Avoid swallowing untreated water.
- Wash hands after contact with livestock, petting zoos, and pets, especially if they have diarrhea.
- Have pets routinely checked for parasites by your veterinarian, especially if they have diarrhea.
- When traveling outside the United States:
 - Do not eat uncooked fruits or vegetables unless you peel them yourself.
 - Do not eat foods or drinks from street vendors.
 - Do not drink or eat local water or ice.

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information, please refer to: <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/giardia/>.

Information on Healthy Water may be found at:
<http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/>.

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