

What kind of infection is it?

Cryptosporidium is a single celled parasite (sometimes called "Crypto").

How do people get infected?

- *Cryptosporidium* is often found in the intestines of calves and cows.
- *Cryptosporidium* can survive for a long time in water.
- Infection in people may result from drinking water contaminated with *Cryptosporidium* or swallowing contaminated water in swimming pools or water parks.
- *Cryptosporidium* can be transmitted from one person with diarrhea to another because of poor hand washing.
- *Cryptosporidium* can cause diarrhea in people who have traveled to poor countries.

What are the usual symptoms?

- Illness usually starts 7-10 days after exposure.
- Nausea, fatigue, diarrhea, and stomach pain or cramps.
- Diarrhea is usually watery and frequent.

How long does it last?

- 10-14 days in otherwise healthy children and adults. Can be longer in persons with weakened immune systems.

How is it treated?

- Prevent and treat dehydration. Warning signs of dehydration include dry mouth, decreased urination, or dizziness.
- Treatment is optional for otherwise healthy children who will usually get over *Cryptosporidium* on their own.
- A medication called nitazoxanide can shorten the duration of diarrhea.

Are there possible complications?

- Dehydration and weight loss can occur.
- *Cryptosporidium* can be very prolonged and hard to get rid of for patients with weakened immune systems.
- Patients who have had transplants can get *Cryptosporidium* in the liver or gall bladder.

Comments:

- Wash hands carefully after using the bathroom, changing diapers and before and after cooking.
- Wash hands after contact with cows or calves.
- Do not drink untreated water from rivers, streams, or ponds.
- Do not swallow water in swimming pools or water parks.
- Take children out of the pool for regular bathroom breaks.
- Children with diarrhea should not swim or use water parks.

Resources:

- [CDC Handout](#)