



FACT SHEET

Cryptosporidiosis

What is it?

Cryptosporidiosis is an illness in which a parasite, *Cryptosporidium parvum*, is present in the intestinal tract. The parasite produces cysts (eggs) which are passed from the body in the stool (bowel movements). People with strong healthy immune systems usually recover on their own. People with weak immune systems may have symptoms for longer periods and repeated illness episodes

Symptoms

- Symptoms mostly consist of watery diarrhea, abdominal cramping, and lack of appetite.
- Sometimes symptoms include fever, nausea, vomiting and headache.
- Many people may have a mild and brief diarrhea or no symptoms at all.

How is it spread?

- *Cryptosporidium* can be found naturally in lakes and streams. People who drink water from streams or lakes may swallow the cysts.
- *Cryptosporidium* can also spread from one person to another directly or via contaminated objects or food if the infected person does not wash their hands well after going to the bathroom. When others eat food or drink fluids contaminated with these cysts they will become infected.
- Animals can have *cryptosporidium* and pass it on to people who handle or clean up after the animal or when animal feces (bowel movements) contaminate water or food supplies.
- *Cryptosporidium* can be transmitted by sexual contact.

Diagnosis and Treatment

- Cryptosporidiosis is diagnosed in a laboratory by examining a stool sample. A health care provider must specifically request the lab for cryptosporidiosis.
- No drug is completely effective; however, some treatments are used for people with severe infections.
- Encourage the person to drink plenty of fluids to prevent fluid loss

Prevention

- Wash hands thoroughly after going to the bathroom, changing diapers, before preparing meals, or eating. Wash with hot soapy water. Keep bathroom clean and supplied with soap and clean towels
- Disinfect diapering areas, toys, and cribs.
- Discourage children from putting objects in their mouths. Children who attend child care programs should be kept at home if they have diarrhea.
- If someone else develops the symptoms, their stool should be checked for *cryptosporidium*.

Additional Information

- Standard chlorine treatment does not eliminate them. Filtration or ozone treatment units may be added in the future to reduce the number of *cryptosporidium* in the water system.

Report all cases to El Paso Department of Public Health by calling 915-771-5810

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