

GIARDIASIS

Reportable Disease

CAUSE

Giardia lamblia, parasite

SYMPTOMS

Gas, stomach cramps and bloating, nausea, diarrhea (possibly ongoing or recurring), greasy stools, loss of appetite, and weight loss. Children who are infected often show no symptoms. Illness usually lasts between 2 to 6 weeks.

SPREAD

Giardia parasites leave the body through the stool of an infected person and enter another person when hands, food, or objects (such as toys) contaminated with stool are placed in the mouth. Spread can occur when people do not wash their hands after using the toilet or changing diapers. Spread can occur whether or not a person feels sick (asymptomatic.) 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.

INCUBATION (time from exposure to onset of symptoms)
3 days to 3 weeks, usually 7 to 14 days

CONTAGIOUS PERIOD

As long as *Giardia* parasites are present in the stool, a person can pass the germs on to other people. *Giardia* can be present in stool for several weeks or months after symptoms have stopped.

EXCLUSION

Child care and School: Until 24 hours after diarrhea and vomiting stops, and treatment is completed.

Exclusion may be necessary during outbreaks. Everyone with *Giardia* should **not** use swimming beaches, pools, water parks, spas, or hot tubs for at least 2 weeks after diarrhea has stopped. Staff with *Giardia* may be restricted from working in food service. Call your local health department to see if these restrictions apply.

DIAGNOSIS

Recommend parents/guardians call their healthcare provider if their child has symptoms of giardiasis. There is a lab test to detect *Giardia* in the stool.

TREATMENT

Treatment is available. Vomiting and diarrhea may lead to dehydration, which may be a medical emergency. Ask a healthcare provider how to prevent dehydration.

PREVENTION/CONTROL

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after using the toilet and changing diapers and before preparing or eating food. Staff should closely monitor handwashing of all children after children have used the bathroom or have been diapered.
- DO NOT allow children to swallow water when swimming in lakes or swimming pools, using hot tubs, or playing in fountains.

- Clean and disinfect diapering area and potty chairs after each use and bathroom toilets, sinks, and toys at least daily and when soiled.
- Clean and disinfect mouthed objects, toys and surfaces at least once daily and when soiled.

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