

Cryptosporidiosis



Frequently Asked Questions

What is *Cryptosporidiosis*?

Cryptosporidiosis is a diarrheal illness caused by a parasite. It is often called Crypto.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of *Cryptosporidiosis* usually begin about 7 days (range: 2-10 days) after infection with the parasite and last 1-2 weeks. Symptoms include:

- Diarrhea
- Weight loss
- Stomach cramps/pain
- Fever
- Nausea
- Vomiting

How does it spread?

Cryptosporidiosis is spread through the fecal-oral route. A person needs to ingest the parasite, which can occur from eating contaminated food or water, or indirectly through diaper changing or sexual activity.

Who is at risk of developing *Cryptosporidiosis*?

Anyone can become infected with *Cryptosporidiosis*. It is more common for these groups to get it:

- Travelers and immigrants from areas with poor water treatment and food sanitation
- Diaper-aged children, especially in child care settings
- Close contacts of someone who has *Cryptosporidiosis*
- Swimmers who swallow contaminated water
- People exposed to fecal matter (stool) during sexual activities
- People who handle infected cattle

How is it diagnosed and treated?

The test for crypto is through a stool specimen to look for the parasite. Your physician may request several stool cultures because it can be hard to distinguish from another similar parasite. Cryptosporidiosis can be treated with nitazoxanide. Diarrhea can cause fluid loss and dehydration, so it is important to drink fluids. If you have a weakened immune system, it is very important to seek medical care. Crypto can be life threatening in people with weakened immune systems.

What should I do if I think I have it?

If you think you have *Cryptosporidiosis*, you should contact your doctor and discuss your symptoms.

How is it prevented?

- There is no vaccine for *Cryptosporidiosis*.
- If you are traveling to an area with poor water treatment, make sure to drink bottled water or boil the water and do not drink drinks with ice cubes.
- Good hand washing can help prevent *Cryptosporidiosis*, especially after going to the bathroom or changing diapers, and before preparing food.
- If you are swimming, follow proper swimming hygiene. Do not swim until at least 2 weeks after your diarrhea has stopped and shower before swimming.

For more information contact your doctor, refer to <http://www.phila.gov/Health/> or contact the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, Division of Disease Control at 215-685-6740.

