



Cryptosporidiosis is a disease caused by microscopic germs - parasites called Cryptosporidium. Cryptosporidium can be found in water, food, soil or on surfaces or dirty hands that have been contaminated with the faeces (poo) of infected humans or animals.

What are the symptoms and how long do they last?

Symptoms usually begin 2 to 10 days (average 7 days) after being infected and include:

- Watery diarrhoea
- Stomach cramps or pain
- Feeling sick or vomiting
- Fever
- Weight loss

Symptoms usually last about 1 to 2 weeks in people with healthy immune systems but can last longer and be more severe in people with weakened immune systems. Some people will have no symptoms at all.

Who is at risk?

Anyone can get Cryptosporidiosis but it is most common in:

- Children aged between one and five years
- People who care for or work with young children

How do you catch it?

Cryptosporidiosis is predominantly a waterborne disease and infections can be caused by drinking contaminated water or swallowing contaminated water in swimming pools or streams. It can also be acquired by animal and human contact.

How do you avoid getting or spreading Cryptosporidium infection?

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water:
 - Before preparing and eating food
 - After handling raw food
 - After going to the toilet or changing a baby's nappy
 - After touching pets and other animals, or their faeces (poo)
 - Alcohol-based hand gels do not kill Cryptosporidium
- Do not drink untreated water.
- Always wash and/or peel fruits and vegetables before eating them.
- Avoid swallowing water in lakes and swimming pools.
- During farm visits, wash your hands after any contact with animals, and only eat in designated areas.

How can I clean at home to prevent the spread of Cryptosporidiosis?

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and hot water after going to the toilet and help young children to wash their hands.
- Clean toilet seats, flush handles, basins and taps after use.
- Wash clothes and bedding that has poo or vomit on it separately from other clothes at 60°C or the hottest setting the object can stand.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after handling soiled clothes or bedding
- Give the person with Cryptosporidiosis a separate towel to use.

How do you treat Cryptosporidiosis?

There is no specific treatment for this infection. Most people with a healthy immune system will recover within one month. It is important to drink plenty of fluids as diarrhoea or vomiting can lead to dehydration and you can lose important sugars and minerals from your body. If you feel sick, try taking small sips of fluid, frequently. Avoid tea, coffee, carbonated drinks and alcohol. Your doctor may recommend a re-hydration solution, available from your local pharmacist.

Do you need to stay off work, school or nursery?

Yes, you should not return to work or school or nursery until you have been free from diarrhoea and/or vomiting for 48 hours.

You should tell your employer you have had Cryptosporidiosis if you work with vulnerable groups such as the elderly, the young, those in poor health, or if you handle food.

Using swimming pools and hot tubs

If you have Cryptosporidiosis, do not go swimming or use hot tubs / jacuzzi until you have been free from diarrhoea for at least two weeks. This will protect other people from catching the infection.