



Shire of Denmark

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Giardia



What is *Giardia*?

Giardia (gee-ar-dee-ah) is a microscopic parasite that can infect warm-blooded animals and humans. *Giardia* is a teardrop parasite that is protected by an outer shell called a cyst that allows it to survive outside the body for a long period of time. If these cysts are ingested, *Giardia* can cause the illness known as Giardiasis, an intestinal illness.

Giardia usually gives rise to such symptoms as:

- **watery or greasy diarrhoea**
- **feeling of being bloated**
- **abdominal pain**
- **weight loss**
- **nausea**

There is usually a period of 7 to 10 days after consuming the organism before symptoms develop. In some cases this period may be as short as 5 days or as long as 25 days.

Where does *Giardia* come from?

Wild and domestic animals and man serve as a host for this infection. Person to person transmission of the infection occurs by hand to mouth transfer of cysts from the faeces of an infected individual.

Localised outbreaks occur from consumption of faecal contaminated water or less commonly faecal contaminated food. Unfiltered stream or lake waters that are open to contamination by

animals, rainwater and untreated bore water are a frequent source of infection.

Concentrations of chlorine used in routine water treatment do not destroy *Giardia* cysts, however they are destroyed easily by boiling.

Treatment

Medication for both adults and children is available for this infection and if you or your family members are infected you should consult your doctor if you have not already done so. Relapses may occur even after treatment.

How to prevent the spread of infection:

1. Hand washing

Thorough hand washing and drying is the most important factor in preventing the spread of gastroenteritis type infections. Attendants must carry this out after handling the patients, their bedding, clothing or sick room equipment and again before preparing or serving food.

Patients and attendants must always wash their hands after going to the toilet and before meals. Towels must not be shared.

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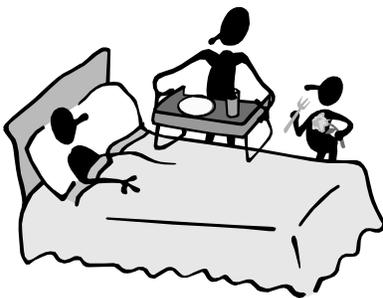
2. Disposal of excreta and soiled materials

Excreta and urine should be disposed of down the toilet.

Soiled clothing and bed linen should be washed in a domestic washing machine on a 'hot-cycle'. If the amount of soiling makes this impractical, as much faecal material as possible should be flushed away in running water, preferably in a toilet bowl. Soaking in a household disinfectant may also be used before washing to reduce the contamination. Plastic gloves should be worn when handling soiled laundry where possible and the hands must be thoroughly washed afterwards.

3. Disinfection

Toilet seats, flush handles, wash basin taps and toilet door handles should be cleaned daily, or more frequent depending on how often they are used. After use, wipe toilet seats with disinfectant. Bedpans should be emptied into the toilet bowl and then washed with detergent, rinsed and then disinfected.



4. Infected persons

- (a) Children should stay away from day care, pre-school or school until symptoms have abated and a course of treatment has been taken.
- (b) Food handlers, persons associated with child care, institutional care, nursing homes and hospitals should refrain from work until symptoms have abated and a course of treatment has been taken.

