



Cryptosporidiosis

What is it?

Cryptosporidiosis is an illness caused by a single celled parasite (*Cryptosporidium*). When the parasite enters the body, it lives in the intestine and is passed in the feces (stool). *Cryptosporidium* causes the diarrheal disease *Cryptosporidiosis*. It's occurrence is worldwide.

How is it spread?

Cryptosporidium is shed in the feces of infected animals and humans. The illness can be acquired through animal-to-person or person-to-person transmission. Persons can become infected if they swallow contaminated food or water.

What are the symptoms and when do they occur?

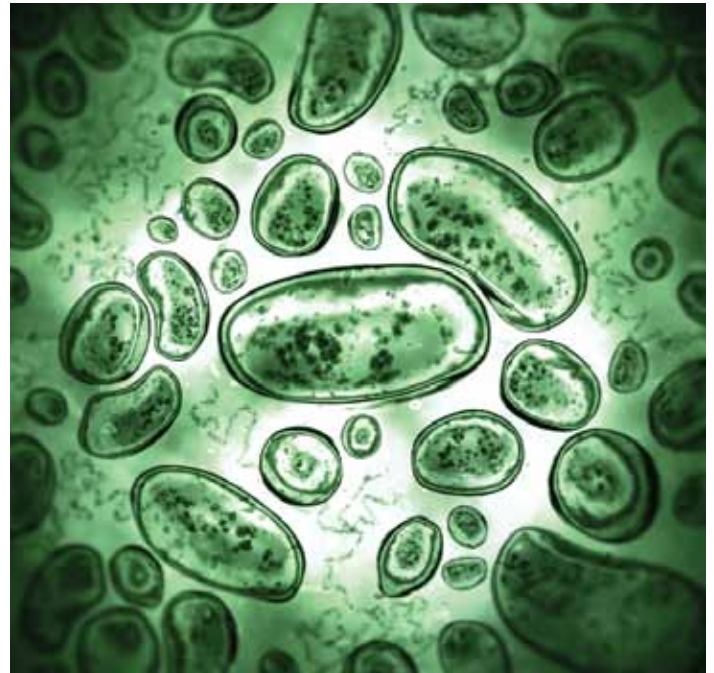
Symptoms can occur anywhere from 1-12 days following the ingestion of the organism, with an average of 7 days. The organism can continue to be excreted in the stool for several weeks after symptoms have resolved.

Symptoms include watery diarrhea (most common), and crampy abdominal pain. Children may experience loss of appetite and vomiting prior to the diarrhea. Malaise, nausea and vomiting, and loss of appetite may also occur in adults, but less often.

How can I protect myself and prevent the spread?

To prevent the spread to yourself or others, the following measures should be practiced:

- Practice thorough hand washing with soap and warm water.
- Use care when handling animal feces. Wear disposable gloves, then wash your hands.
- Exclude children with diarrhea from daycares until the diarrhea stops.
- Remove infected persons with symptoms from jobs that require food handling.
- Pets with diarrhea should be examined by a veterinarian.
- Water from a cistern connected to the eaves troughs is not a safe supply. Eaves troughs should not be connected to a cistern.
- If you have *cryptosporidiosis*, do not swim in public water for at least two weeks after the diarrhea stops. Just being immersed in the water may contaminate it.



- NOTE: *Cryptosporidium* is not killed by chlorine, so can be spread in chlorinated pools and can live for days in chlorine treated water.

Cryptosporidiosis must be reported to the Medical Officer of Health as required by the Health Promotion and Protection Act.

For more information, please contact a member of Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit's Infectious Disease Team.

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Simcoe

P.O. Box 247, 12 Gilbertson Drive
Simcoe, ON N3Y 4L1
519.426.6170 / 905.318.6623

Email: info@hnhu.org
Web: www.hnhu.org

Caledonia

282 Argyle Street South
Caledonia, ON N3W 1K7
905.318.5367