

Giardia lamblia

What is it?

Giardia lamblia is a microscopic parasite that is associated with water and infected animals.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms may vary, but yours may have included:

- diarrhoea, particularly smelly;
- stomach pain;
- loss of appetite; and
- occasionally nausea.

People and animals can carry Giardia lamblia without showing symptoms.

Symptoms usually start 7-10 days after becoming infected.

What about the mess?

- If you have to clear up diarrhoea or other mess, take care and wear rubber gloves. Scoop up what you can with a dustpan or paper towel. Rinse down a WC, don't use a sink that is used for food preparation or washing up. Wash what is left with cloths, and warm soapy water. Pour dirty water down a WC afterwards. Clean all cloths and equipment with dilute bleach (1 eggcup in a small bucket of warm (not hot) water);
- wash fouled sheets and clothing straight away. Fold them so that you don't touch the dirty parts. Wash on as hot a wash as possible. Do not over fill the washing machine.
- household hygiene is important, disinfect the WC area particularly the flush handle and basin taps and light switches. Ordinary bathroom cleaners are fine; and
- make sure everyone uses his or her own towel and face cloth.

How did I catch it?

- The usual way is by drinking water containing the parasite or eating food washed in this water;
- it can also be caught from handling infected animals such as pets and livestock; and
- person to person spread is very unusual.

How long does it last?

This can vary greatly; symptoms can last for several days.

Symptoms can also return when you think you have recovered.

How is it treated?

Medication can help with the infection so the doctor may prescribe antibiotics (if this happens finish the course).

It is important to keep drinking (clear fluids such as water or dilute squash are a good idea) to stop dehydration while you have diarrhoea.

Can I give it to someone else?

Person to person spread is possible. As the organism appears in faeces, hands that are not washed after using the toilet or changing nappies can spread the infection.

When can I go back to work/ school/ nursery?

If you work with food, are under 5 years old attending school/nursery or care for vulnerable people you should stay away until diarrhoea has stopped for 48 hours.

You must still maintain good personal hygiene when you return.

Other children should not return to school until symptoms have stopped.

What can I do to prevent getting it again?

1. Food

- If you are ill avoid preparing food for yourself or others;
- make sure all water is properly treated. If the water supply maybe contaminated by animal or human faeces water should be boiled; and
- be careful not to spread the organism to ready-to- eat food such as cold meats and salad by washing in untreated water.

2. Wash your hands

Everyone in the household (including children) should take care to wash their hands properly with soap and rinse them under running water after using the toilet and:

- after you have cleared up diarrhoea;
- after you have been nursing ill people;
- after you have handled laundry or changed nappies;
- before you eat or cook; and
- often during the preparation of food (especially after handling raw meat and raw eggs).

As an extra precaution you can use an antibacterial soap.

For further information please contact:

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