

Fact Sheet: Giardiasis

What is Giardiasis?

Giardiasis is a disease caused by a parasite that gets into the intestines. The Giardia parasite lays eggs that are passed out of the body with a bowel movement.

What are the symptoms?

- Many loose, watery bowel movements that are yellow, frothy and smell worse than usual
- Diarrhea alternating with constipation
- A lot of gas
- Stomach aches
- Little or no appetite

Symptoms usually appear in 7-10 days. Infection with no symptoms is common. Symptoms may last between 7-10 days; however, some people have symptoms lasting 25 days.

How is it spread?

People infected with the parasite that do not wash their hands after having a bowel movement or after changing the soiled diapers of an infected child can spread Giardia to others. Drinking contaminated water, such as untreated water from lakes and streams, can also transmit Giardia.

How is it treated?

If you have this disease, you will be given medicine to take. **Take all of the medicine as prescribed, even if you start to feel better.** If you or anyone in your family is diagnosed with this disease, **ALL** members of the family should be checked by your doctor for Giardia.

Adults with Giardiasis should:

- Not prepare food.
- Wash hands after using the toilet or changing soiled diapers.
- Put disposable diapers in a plastic bag and throw out in a tightly closed garbage can.
- Clean the bathroom after each use, including the toilet flushing handle, water faucets and doorknobs, with one part bleach in ten parts water (make a fresh solution everyday).
- Drink plenty of fluids – such as water and fruit juice - to reduce the risk of dehydration.

Children with Giardiasis should:

- Wash their hands after using the toilet.
- Stay away from other children until they are well.
- Wash toys that can be put in a child's mouth after each child's use - with one part bleach in ten parts water (make a fresh solution everyday).

How is it prevented?

Prompt and proper treatment and the above personal hygiene measures will help to stop the spread of Giardia to other family members and will speed up your recovery.

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self -diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information call your health care provider or call Washtenaw County Public Health at 734-544-6700.