



## FACT SHEET

### Cryptosporidiosis

Cryptosporidiosis is a diarrhea illness.

- Cause:** *Cryptosporidium parvum* is a protozoa. Oocytes are excreted in feces and are the infectious form.
- Symptoms:** Mild to profuse watery diarrhea, abdominal cramps, nausea, vomiting, and fever. The symptoms wax and wane but generally stop in about 30 days for otherwise healthy people. Immunocompromised people (e.g., people with AIDS or cancer) may develop chronic cryptosporidiosis.
- Spread:** The organism can be spread in a number of ways. Person-to-person spread plays an important role, especially in diaper-aged children by oral-fecal route. When the organism leaves the body through the stool of an infected person and enters another by hands, food or objects are placed in the mouth. Animal-to-person spread occurs, especially with animals less than six months old. Cryptosporidia can be spread by ingesting food or water contaminated with stool, including water in the recreational water parks and swimming pools. Outbreaks have been associated with swimming pools. Other potential vectors include fruits and vegetables contaminated by cryptosporidia from the soil.
- Incubation:** Onset of symptoms usually occurs from 1 to 14 days, with an average of 7 days, after ingestion of the organism.
- Contagious Period:** An infected person is contagious from the onset of symptoms and for as long as the organism is present in the stools. It may take several weeks to completely rid the cryptosporidia from the stools. Outside the body, the organism may remain infectious for two to six months in a moist environment
- Precautions:** **Use gloves for diapered or incontinent children <6 years of age for duration of illness.**
- Reportable:** Within 7 days by the provider to the Local or State Public Health Department.
- Diagnosis:** Diagnosis is generally made by a lab test that identifies oocysts in fecal smears or of life cycle stages of the parasites in intestinal biopsy sections.
- Treatment:** Although there is no effective treatment known, fluid and electrolyte replacement therapy may be needed to prevent dehydration. Antidiarrheal medications may alleviate symptoms, but do not cure the infection. Your physician may prescribe 3 day course of nitazoxanide oral suspension which has been licensed by the Food and Drug Administration for the treatment of children with diarrhea caused by cryptosporidiosis parvum. Otherwise healthy people resolve the infection on their own. Chronic cryptosporidiosis in people on chemotherapy resolves after completion of therapy.

**Exclusion:** Until diarrhea has stopped and at least 3 stool specimens collected on separate days are negative.

**Prevention  
Control:**

- 1) Wash hands thoroughly with soap and running water for at least 20 seconds after using the toilet, changing diapers, handling and cleaning up after pets, and before preparing or eating food. Thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent spread of infectious diseases found in the intestinal tract. Parent/guardians and child care staff should closely monitor handwashing of all children after bathroom use or diapering. If hand sanitizers are used, they may be used only after thorough handwashing.
- 2) Clean and disinfect contaminated areas (diapering area, toilets, potty-chairs) and sanitize toys at least daily and when soiled.

**Bleach Disinfectant**

- **¼ cup bleach in a gallon of water**
  - **1 tablespoon bleach in a quart of water**
- PREPARE FRESH SOLUTION DAILY.**

**OR**

**Commercial disinfectant that is EPA approved**  
FOLLOW MANUFACTURER'S DIRECTIONS.

**Bleach Sanitizer (Use non-scented)**

- **1 teaspoon bleach in 1 gallon water**
- **¼ teaspoon bleach in 1 quart water**

Use test strip to check concentration. Do not rinse. Air dry.  
**PREPARE FRESH SOLUTION DAILY.**

**OR**

**Commercial or food grade sanitizer that is EPA approved**  
FOLLOW MANUFACTURER'S DIRECTIONS.