

What is cryptosporidiosis?

Cryptosporidiosis is a diarrhoeal illness caused by a parasite called cryptosporidium. Both the disease and the parasite are commonly known as “crypto”.

What illness results from infection?

The incubation period (the time from first swallowing the crypto to becoming ill) is normally 2-10 days. Illness may start with loss of appetite, nausea and abdominal pain. This is followed by profuse watery diarrhoea, vomiting (in children), and mild fever. In otherwise healthy people the illness lasts for about 2 weeks. If you have a weakened immune system you are at risk of more severe illness.

Should I see my GP?

You should consult your GP if one or more of the following applies to you:

- If your immune system is not working properly, for example, due to cancer treatment or HIV.
- There is blood in your diarrhoea
- You have severe abdominal pain
- The diarrhoea has lasted for 48 hours

How are infections treated?

Most people recover without any specific treatment. Extra fluids are

important, especially for babies, children, pregnant women and the elderly. Clear fluids like water and diluted fruit juice are recommended.

All persons with diarrhoea should remain off work or school until they have had no symptoms for 48 hours

Where does crypto come from?

Crypto lives in the guts of many mammals, and most often, in their newborn, particularly lambs and calves. Millions of crypto can be released in a bowel movement from an infected animal (or human). Crypto may thus be found in the soil, food, water, or surfaces that have been contaminated with the faeces of infected animals and humans.

How does it spread?

- Directly from contact with an infected animal or person
 - By swallowing contaminated water from swimming pools, lochs or burns
 - By eating uncooked foods contaminated with crypto
 - By drinking unpasteurised milk
 - In contaminated drinking water.
- Crypto has a very protective outer shell that stops the chlorine in our water from killing it.

How can infection be prevented?

- Wash hands thoroughly after contact with all animals and their faeces; after using the toilet or changing nappies.
- Avoid drinking water from burns and lochs.
- Avoid using ice or drinking untreated water when travelling in countries where the water supply may be unsafe.
- Don't go swimming if you have diarrhoea. If your baby has been ill, wait until their nappies have been back to normal for a couple of days, and use a proper swim nappy.

How should hands be washed?

Always use warm, running water and a mild, preferably liquid, soap. (It is not necessary to use soaps labelled as antiseptic or antibacterial.)

- Wet hands and apply a small amount of soap
- Rub hands together vigorously for 10-15 seconds
- Pay special attention to areas between fingers, finger tips, and palms
- Rinse hands under warm running water
- Dry thoroughly on a clean dry towel.

***If someone in your household has
crypto:***

- The infected person should not prepare food.
- Soiled bedding and clothes should be washed on the hot cycle of your washing machine.
- Clean surfaces (toilet seats, flush handles, door handles and taps) at least daily with bleach diluted as per manufacturer's instructions.
- If cleaning up diarrhoea or vomit, wear rubber gloves; wash the surface with hot soapy water, rinse, and allow to dry. Use paper towels or disposable cloths. Dispose of used cloths immediately in a plastic bag (e.g. used carrier)
- The infected person should not share towels/flannels with anyone.

For further information see:
www.foodstandards.gov.uk

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