

Cryptosporidiosis (*Cryptosporidium* infection)

What is cryptosporidiosis?

Cryptosporidiosis is an illness caused by a microscopic parasite *Cryptosporidium parvum*. The disease and the parasite are often called “crypto”.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may appear 2 to 14 days after exposure, but usually within 7 days, and may include:

- Loose stools or watery diarrhea
- Abdominal pain
- Nausea and vomiting
- Dehydration
- Fever
- Weight loss

Some people with crypto will have no symptoms at all but can still spread the infection to others.

How is it spread?

- When hands, food, water or objects (toys, etc.) become contaminated with infected stool and then gets into someone’s mouth.
- Not washing hands after using the bathroom or changing diapers.
- Swallowing contaminated water (especially in swimming pools, lakes, rivers, springs, streams, ponds).
- Drinking or making ice from contaminated water sources.
- Eating contaminated uncooked foods.
- By exposure to human feces through sexual contact.
- Contact with infected animals.

Who gets crypto?

Anyone can get crypto. Those who travel internationally are more likely to develop infection.

Infants, young children, the elderly, and those immunocompromised are at greater risk to develop serious complications.

How is crypto diagnosed?

- By testing a stool sample.

How is crypto treated?

- Most people who have healthy immune systems will recover without treatment.

What should I do if I have symptoms?

- Contact your healthcare provider.

How can I prevent the spread of crypto?

- Wash your hands with warm, soapy water for 20 seconds:
 - After using the bathroom or changing diapers.
 - After contact with animals or their environments (petting zoos, farms, fairs).
 - Before eating or preparing foods.
- Do not swim while you have diarrhea and for two weeks after your diarrhea stops. Chlorine in swimming water cannot kill the parasite.
- Avoid sexual practices that might result in oral exposure to stool.
- Do not send your child to daycare or preschool if he/she has diarrhea.
- Do not go to work if you are a health care worker, food handler, or day care worker and call the health department.
- Do not prepare food for others.
- Do not drink or use ice made from untreated water.
- Do not swallow recreational water.

For further information visit:

- www.foodsafety.gov

Report crypto cases to Saint Louis County Department of Health by calling 314 615 1630.