

What is it?

Giardiasis is an intestinal disease caused by the parasite *Giardia lamblia*. This parasite is protected by an outer shell (cyst) that allows it to survive outside the body and in the environment for long periods of time.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Symptoms include diarrhea, loose mucousy, pale, greasy stools, stomach cramps, bloating, severe gas, weight loss, fatigue and dehydration. Symptoms usually last 2-6 weeks but occasionally become chronic.

What is the incubation period?

Usually 3-25 days, however 7-10 days is the most common.

How is it spread?

It lives in the intestine of infected people and animals (beavers, muskrats, pets and livestock) and is passed in the stool. It may be found in soil, food, water or surfaces that have been contaminated with infected feces. You can become infected if you swallow the cysts by drinking infected water from ponds or other contaminated water sources, or from eating contaminated food. It can be spread from person to person.

How do you prevent Giardiasis infection?

- Wash hands after using the toilet, changing diapers, handling pets or livestock, and before preparing food.
- Peel or thoroughly wash all vegetables and fruits before eating.
- Don't drink water directly from rivers, creeks, streams or lakes until it has been properly treated.

Other Questions?

Talk to your health care provider or call our Communicable Disease Program at 613-966-5500 x349. Toll Free 1-800-267-2803 | TTY Dial 711 (1-800-267-6511) | www.hpepublichealth.ca

References

- Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors, Giardiasis.
- Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington Public Health, Giardiasis, June 2009.

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