

# Cryptosporidiosis

## What is Cryptosporidiosis?

Cryptosporidiosis is a diarrheal disease caused by a microscopic parasite. It can live in the intestine of humans and animals and is passed in the stool of an infected person or animal. Both the disease and the parasite are also commonly referred to as "crypto." The parasite is found in every region of the United States and throughout the world. Cryptosporidium is transmitted by direct ingestion of contaminated feces or water. Consumption of contaminated water is the most common means of transmission. Ingesting uncooked contaminated foods may also lead to infection.

## What are the symptoms in people?

Symptoms include watery and profuse diarrhea, stomach cramps, upset stomach, and a slight fever. Some people have no symptoms.

## What are the symptoms in animals?

Cryptosporidiosis is common in calves. Infected calves can shed a large number of infectious organisms (oocysts). Calves generally will have diarrhea. Other animals such as pigs, foals, and cats can also be infected.

## How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms generally begin 2-10 days after infection. In persons with healthy immune systems, symptoms usually last about two weeks; the symptoms may go in cycles in which you may seem to get better for a few days, then feel worse, before the illness ends.

## How is it diagnosed?

Infection is diagnosed on a submitted stool sample.

## How is it treated?

Cryptosporidiosis usually resolves on its own. Supportive care is necessary in cases of severe diarrhea.

## How can it be prevented?

The best way to prevent infection is by practicing good hygiene — wash your hands often. Avoid contaminated water—do not swallow pool or untreated water, boil/filter water if uncertain, and be cautious when traveling to other countries. Avoid contaminated food by washing and peeling vegetables and fruits before eating, and using clean water to wash foods.

This fact sheet provides general information. Please contact your physician or veterinarian for specific information related to you or your animals.

For more information go to:

- **Centers for Disease Control**  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
- **National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians** [www.nasphv.org](http://www.nasphv.org)