

Patients with poor immunity

Patients with poor immunity may be advised by their doctor not to drink un-boiled tap water because if infected, the symptoms may be prolonged or life threatening. This advice is more relevant in the spring and early summer when mains tap water may be contaminated by this parasite. People who are HIV positive or have AIDS ; and people who have severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID) or a hyper-gammaglobulinemia should **never** drink unboiled tap water. If you are unsure whether your condition merits this advice you should check with your doctor. Bringing water to the boil is adequate to destroy the parasite oocyst (egg). Prolonged boiling is not necessary. To avoid scald injuries it is advisable to boil a full kettle last thing at night, allow to cool overnight and then store in the fridge until required.

Bottled water varies in its risk of being contaminated with the parasite oocyst though so far there are no reports of cryptosporidium in bottled water causing illness in the UK.

**For further information please contact
Infection Prevention and Control Nurses:
Monday to Friday from 09.00 to 17:00 hrs.**

Lister Hospital on 01438314333 Ext 5383 or
Bleep 5383

www.enher-ts-tr.nhs.uk

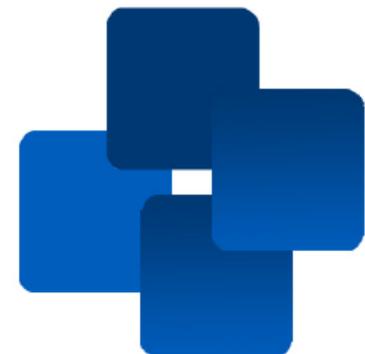
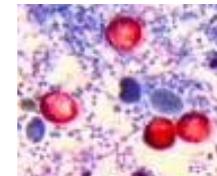
You can request this
information in a
different format or
another language.

Date of publication: November 2014
Author: Infection Prevention & Control Team
Reference: INF
Version: 2
Review Date: November 2017
© East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust

Cryptosporidium Information

Leaflet for Patients and Visitors

**Please follow this guidance
from the Infection Prevention
and Control Team**



What is Cryptosporidium?

Cryptosporidium is a parasite – a type of germ, which can cause an unpleasant illness, with symptoms such as diarrhoea, cramp tummy pains, loss of appetite, vomiting and lethargy. The illness usually lasts 2-3 weeks, but may be longer if the person already has another severe illness.

How is Cryptosporidium caused and spread?

Cryptosporidium is carried in the gut of infected people and many farm animals and pets.

Spread can occur from person to person. The germs then spread from hands directly to other people, especially if hands are not washed after using the toilet or after changing an infected infant's nappy.

Spread can occur from animals to people. This occurs when hands get contaminated and then the hands contaminate food or are put into the mouth. Spread can also occur if water, contaminated with sewerage or animal waste, is drunk.

What is the incubation period?

The time taken from swallowing the bug until symptoms develop ranges from 2 – 14 days (usually 7 days).

How can Cryptosporidium be prevented?

By good hygiene practices:

- Washing your hands after using the toilet.
- Before handling food after touching animals with diarrhoea.
- When cleaning litter trays, pay special care after handling farm animals.
- Travelling abroad make sure you drink only boiled, filtered, or bottled water.

What are the symptoms?

In Great Britain infection is most common in children aged 1 to 5 years. With young adults being the next most commonly affected. 80 – 90% of people affected experience frequent, watery, offensive diarrhoea with abdominal cramps and vomiting. 50% may suffer headache, tiredness and fever. In normal healthy individuals the symptoms usually last for 1 – 3 weeks and then resolve slowly.

What to do if you are ill with Cryptosporidium

Take extra care about hygiene and hand washing. Use warm water and soap whenever possible. If your work involves the care of other people or handling food, you should inform your employer. You are expected to remain off work at least until 48 hours after your symptoms have stopped. Take extra care about hygiene.

If you are admitted to hospital:

Whilst in hospital you are likely to be moved into a side room to minimise risk of cross-infection to other vulnerable patients. Staff will wear aprons and gloves and wash hands carefully, to prevent them transferring this infection to other patients. You must also be careful to wash your own hands after using the toilet. If you require assistance please ask your nurse. After visiting, your visitors should wash their hands carefully but it is not necessary for your visitors to wear the protective clothing as this bug is unlikely to affect healthy people. Whilst you have diarrhoea, it is important that you keep drinking if you are able to take fluids by mouth.