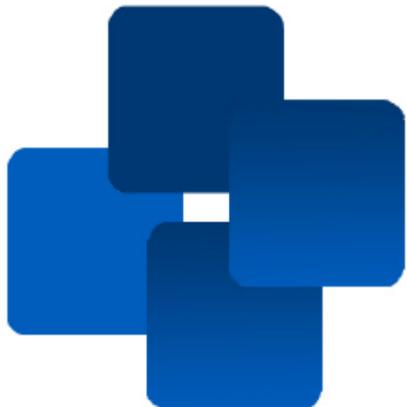


# Giardiasis

## Information Leaflet for Patients and Relatives

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



## **What is Giardiasis?**

Giardiasis is an illness caused by a very small parasite (germ) called Giardia. It causes diarrhoea which is often very smelly, cramping stomach ache and wind. The illness may last for several weeks. It then resolves slowly sometimes over several weeks.

The incubation period (the time taken from swallowing the germs until the illness starts) is usually 7 – 10 days.

## **Who can it affect?**

ANYONE – However, the illness can be more severe and prolonged in people with impaired immune systems. In the UK it is most common in children under 5 years old and young adults.

## **How is the illness caused and spread?**

Giardiasis can be spread from person to person. If a person infected with giardia does not wash their hands properly after using the toilet, they can pass the germs on to another person. This can happen by direct contact or by handling and contaminating food. Spread can also occur by the drinking of water which has been contaminated with sewage or by contact with pets or other animals that are infected, usually because of poor hand washing.

## **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 wash their 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.

## **Visitors:**

After visiting, your visitors should wash their hands carefully but it is not necessary for your visitors to wear the protective clothing as this germ is unlikely to affect healthy people.

## **How can Giardiasis be prevented?**

Washing your hands with soap and water :

- After using the toilet.
- Before handling any food.
- After changing a baby's nappy.
- After contact with pets & animals.

When travelling abroad make sure you only drink treated, boiled, or bottled water. Take extra care on visits to farms or the countryside to wash hands thoroughly with soap and water. Keep pets away from food, dishes and worktops.

## **What is the treatment?**

If you have diarrhoea then drink plenty of fluids. Giardiasis is one of the few stomach bugs where antibiotics help. The treatment is usually with a drug called Metronidazole, which your GP can prescribe. It is very important that you do not drink alcohol while you are having this treatment.

## **Do you need to stay off work, school or nursery?**

YES – Until you have been completely free from any symptoms for 48 hours. Children should not play with other children or attend school or nursery until they are fully recovered and have been symptom free for 48 hours & had a formed stool.

If you work as a food handler, with young children or in healthcare, you must inform your employer and / or seek advice from your Occupational Health Department.

**For further information please contact Infection Prevention and Control Nurses:**

**Monday to Friday 09.00hrs—17.00hrs**

**Lister Hospital** on 01438 285383 Ext 5383 or Bleep 5383

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