

CDRS

Communicable Disease Reporting System

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE FACT SHEET

GIARDIASIS

Giardiasis is an illness caused by *Giardia lamblia*, a parasite that lives in the intestines of people and animals. It is one of the most common causes of waterborne disease in humans in the United States.

Symptoms

Symptoms can include some or all of the following:

- watery, foul-smelling diarrhea
- gas
- lack of appetite
- stomach cramps
- sometimes also fever, nausea, vomiting and headache
- episodes of diarrhea may alternate with constipation
- symptoms usually appear within 7-10 days of being exposed to this protozoan germ

Transmission

- The parasite leaves the body through the stool of an infected person and enters another person when hands, food, or objects (toys, pens, etc.) contaminated with stool, are put in the mouth. Spread can occur whether or not a person feels sick.
- The parasite can be found naturally in some water supplies (such as lakes and streams). People who drink untreated water (water from streams, lakes, etc.) may swallow the parasite and become infected.

Treatment

- Metronidazole (Flagyl) is the drug of choice for adults. Quinacrine is an alternative. Furazolidone (Furoxone) is available for children and infants. As a general rule, only symptomatic infections are treated; however, treatment should be strongly considered for a child care attendee infected with *Giardia*.

Prevention

- Wash hands well after going to the bathroom, after changing diapers, before preparing meals and before eating. Thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent spread of infectious diseases of the intestinal tract.
- Keep bathrooms clean and supplied with soap and clean towels.
- Clean and disinfect areas (potty chairs, toilets, diapering areas) contaminated by stool. Scrub clean with soap and water. Spray surface with a commercial disinfectant or with a bleach solution (1/4 cup of liquid household bleach to a gallon of water) and let air-dry.
- Discourage children from putting objects in their mouths, especially when sharing toys with other children.
- Do not drink water from lakes, streams, or rivers, or that is not clean.

Additional Information

There are special considerations when a Food Handler, Health Care Worker, or Child Care Worker is infected. These people should be excluded from work, and may only return to work after the diarrhea has ceased, and 72 hours of effective antibiotic therapy has been completed.

All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.

Franklin County



Board of Health

Report Disease With Ease - 24 hours a day

www.cdinfo.com

Columbus and Franklin County Communicable Disease Reporting System

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