



GIARDIASIS

WHAT IS GIARDIASIS?

Giardiasis is a gastrointestinal illness caused by a parasite called *Giardia Duodenalis* (formerly called *Giardia Lamblia*) which is found in the feces (stool) of infected animals or humans.

WHO CAN GET GIARDIASIS?

Anyone can get giardiasis.

WHAT ARE SYMPTOMS OF GIARDIASIS?

Symptoms usually appear 3-25 days or longer after exposure. The average time is 7-10 days. Symptoms can be intermittent (come and go) over a long period of time.

Symptoms include:

- diarrhea
- stomach cramps
- bloating
- gas
- fatigue
- weight loss.

It is also possible to have Giardia and not have any symptoms.

HOW IS GIARDIASIS SPREAD?

Giardiasis can be spread when an affected person does not wash his/her hands well after using the bathroom (person to person). This condition is frequently caused by consuming contaminated food or water. Giardiasis is a common illness among campers or hikers who drink untreated water (even accidentally) from rivers or streams.

A person ill with giardiasis is infectious while symptoms are present. These symptoms can be intermittent or chronic and possibly last for several weeks.

People with diarrhea due to giardia should avoid recreational water activities like swimming pools and water slides.

HOW IS GIARDIASIS DIAGNOSED?

Giardiasis is diagnosed by testing a person's stool for the parasite.

HOW IS GIARDIASIS TREATED?

There are several medications available to treat giardiasis. Treatment options should be discussed with your health care provider.

HOW CAN I HELP PREVENT GIARDIASIS?

- Wash hands for 20 seconds with soap and water after using the bathroom or changing diapers. Make sure to scrub the backs of your hands, between your fingers and under your nails. Make sure children also wash their hands.
- Drink only treated water. When camping or backpacking, bring bottled water with you or boil untreated water (i.e., river) for one minute before using it (even for washing).
- Take care when traveling to developing countries. Foods and drinks, in particular raw fruits, and vegetables, may be contaminated. Tap water or ice made from tap water, as well as items from street vendors, may also be contaminated.
- Wash fruits, vegetables, and dishes with safe water.
- Don't cook for others if you have diarrhea.
- Clean surfaces when diapers are changed after every use.
- Wash your hands after handling animals or pets and their waste.

Giardiasis is a Washington State notifiable condition and must be reported to your local health department in Lewis County, contact Communicable Disease Surveillance and Response at 360-740-1223 during business hours or leave a voicemail on our confidential reporting after hours line at 360-740-1275.



WHEN SHOULD I STAY HOME FROM WORK, SCHOOL, OR CHILDCARE?

YOU SHOULD NOT ATTEND WORK, SCHOOL, OR CHILDCARE IF ONE OF THE FOLLOWING APPLIES:

- You have had a fever, diarrhea, nausea, or vomiting within the past 24 hours.
- You do not feel well enough to participate in regular activities.