

# Fact Sheet: Giardiasis

## What is Giardiasis?

Giardiasis (Giardia) is a disease caused by a parasite that invades the intestines. The parasite then lays eggs that are expelled with an individual's bowel movement.

## Signs and Symptoms

- Many loose, watery bowel movements that are yellow and frothy
- Diarrhea alternating with constipation
- Excess of gas
- Stomach pain
- Little or no appetite

Symptoms usually appear in 7-10 days. Infection with no symptoms is common. Symptoms may last between 7-10 days, although some individuals have prolonged symptoms.

**If you are a food service worker, a health care worker, or a childcare worker, report your illness to your supervisor and do not work until your medical provider says it is OK.**

## Prevention

- Practice appropriate hygiene measures such as cleaning and hand washing
- Wash your hands after having contact with fecal material
- Avoid drinking water from lakes, rivers, and streams.

## How is it spread?

Giardia can be spread through the fecal-oral route when individuals fail to wash their hands after having a bowel movement or after changing the soiled diapers of an infected child. Drinking contaminated water, such as untreated water from lakes and streams, can also transmit Giardia. Anything that comes into contact with feces from infected humans or animals can become contaminated with the parasite.

## Treatment

If you do have this disease, the doctor will give you Medication to take. **Make sure that you take all of the medication.** Do not stop taking the medicine even if you feel better. If you or anyone in your family is diagnosed with this disease, **ALL** members of the family should be checked by your doctor for Giardia.

### Adults with Giardia should do the following:

- Drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration
- **DO NOT** prepare food
- Clean and disinfect the bathroom after each use

### Parents of children with Giardia should do the following:

- Wash their hands after going to the restroom
- Stay away from other children until your healthcare provider says otherwise
- Wash and disinfect toys on a daily basis that can be placed in a child's mouth.

This fact sheet is for informational purposes and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care professional. For more information about communicable disease, speak to your health care provider or call the Ingham County Health Department at (517)-887-4308.

Visit our website at <http://hd.ingham.org>

or the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention at: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)  
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