

## FACT SHEET

### Giardia

Giardiasis is an intestinal illness common worldwide in children under age two. Poor sanitation contributes to spread and outbreaks. Humans, cats, dogs, cattle and beaver are known carriers. Outbreaks can occur in childcare settings where there are children in diapers. <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/giardia/index.html>

- Cause:** It is caused by a microscopic parasite (protozoan) called *Giardia lamblia*.
- Symptoms:** It is characterized by gas, stomach cramps and bloating, foul smelling diarrhea, and weight loss. Fever is rare. Occasionally, infected persons develop chronic diarrhea lasting several weeks or months, with significant weight loss. Children very often show no signs of illness. It is the most common reported diarrhea illness in the U.S.
- Spread:** Giardia is passed in the stools of an infected person or animal which may contaminate food or water. Transmission is likely to occur in places (e.g., daycare centers) when hands, food or objects (toys) contaminated with stool, are put into the mouth. Spread may occur even if the person does not feel sick.
- Incubation:** It may range from 3-25 days or more, usually 7-10 days from the time of exposure until symptoms begin.
- Contagious Period:** A person can be a source of infection as long as Giardia is present in the stool.
- Exclusion:** Until diarrhea has stopped. Children who show Giardia in their stools, but who do not have any symptoms, do not need to be excluded.
- Reportable:** This disease is reportable to the health department by the provider within seven days. Parent/guardians notify your child care provider if your child has this illness.
- Prevention:** Thoroughly wash hands with soap and running water for 20 seconds after using the toilet, changing diapers, and before preparing or eating food. Thorough hand washing is the best way to prevent spread of infectious diseases found in the intestinal tract. Parent/guardian and child care providers should closely monitor hand washing of all children after bathroom use or diapering.

Clean and disinfect contaminated areas (diapering area, toilets, and potty-chairs) and sanitize toys at least daily and when soiled. Wash hands well after handling contaminated areas, items changing areas.

Carefully dispose of sewage and disposable diaper wastes so as not to contaminate surface or ground water. Wash hands well after handling wastes.

**Bleach Disinfectant:**

- ¼ cup regular bleach in a gallon of water
- 1 tablespoon regular bleach in a quart of water

**PREPARE FRESH SOLUTION DAILY**

**OR**

**Commercial disinfectant that is EPA approved  
FOLLOW MANUFACTURER'S DIRECTIONS**

**Diagnosis and  
Treatment:**

Discuss this information with your doctor if you or your child has symptoms of giardia. A lab test is used to detect Giardia in the stool. If Giardia parasites are found, anti-parasite drugs are available as treatment.