



Giardia

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What is Giardia?

Giardia is a protozoan, or parasite, that can cause intestinal illnesses.

What are the symptoms of Giardia?

Symptoms of Giardia include chronic diarrhea, abdominal cramps, bloating, frequent loose and pale greasy stools, fatigue and weight loss. Some individuals may be asymptomatic.

How soon do symptoms appear after infection occurs ?

The incubation period is normally three to 25 days. The average is between 7-10 days.

How long is Giardia contagious?

Persons with Giardia are contagious throughout the course of the infection.

How is Giardia spread?

Giardia primarily occurs from hand-to-mouth transfer of feces from an infected person. The ingestion of fecally contaminated drinking and recreational water can also be a source of transmission as well as consuming fecally contaminated food. Anal intercourse has also been reported to facilitate transmission of the parasite.

How is Giardia treated?

Several prescription drugs are available to treat Giardia. Although Giardia can infect all people, young children and pregnant women may be more susceptible to dehydration resulting from diarrhea and should, therefore, drink plenty of fluids while ill.

How can you prevent Giardia?

Personal hygiene is very important. Proper precautions can be taken to guard against infection.

Precautions include:

- Washing hands before handling food, before eating, after using the restroom and after changing a diaper.
- Infected individuals should remember to wash their hands carefully and frequently with soap and water.
- Dispose of feces and/or diapers in a sanitary manner in order to protect the public water supply from contamination of animal or human feces.
- Those infected with Giardia should not return to work or school until 24 hours after symptoms are gone.

How can I get more information on Giardia?

For more information on Giardia or any other health issues, call the Sedgwick County Health Department at 660-7392. Or visit the Sedgwick County website at www.sedgwickcounty.org.