

Environmental Services Department

Guidance on Infectious Disease

Giardia



What is Giardia?

Giardia Lamblia is a microscopic parasite which lives in the gut of people and animals. It causes diarrhoeal illness known as Giardiasis and is often associated with loose or watery stools, stomach pains and flatulence.

How do you catch it?

Usually it is associated with direct contact with an infected person or animal. Eating food or drinking water contaminated with the parasite may also cause illness.

What is the incubation period?

The incubation period is the delay between the organism entering your body and you becoming unwell. For this illness it can be anywhere between 3 to 25 days. In otherwise healthy people illness may last 2-6 weeks, occasionally, symptoms may last longer.

How is it treated?

Although Giardiasis can affect all people, young children, pregnant women and the elderly may be more susceptible to the effects of diarrhoea. However, it is important for everyone to drink plenty of fluids whilst ill.

Unlike other stomach upsets Giardiasis is one of the few where antibiotics can sometimes help. Your doctor will advise you upon this.

How do I stop it being passed on?

- **Always** wash and dry your hands thoroughly **after** using the toilet, handling soiled bedding/clothes, changing nappies, animal contact and **before** preparing and eating food.
- Ensure that door and toilet handles, taps and loo seats are cleaned thoroughly and disinfected regularly.
- Whilst you are ill try to avoid sharing towels and bath water.
- When in foreign countries where hygiene standards are poor drink bottled water only. Remember ice cubes and the water in which salads are prepared may be made using contaminated water.

Should I stay away from work or school?

You should stay away from work or school until you have had no symptoms for at least 24 hours. You do not need to stay away if you have been in contact with someone who has Giardiasis if you have no symptoms yourself.

If you are a food handler or working with a vulnerable group, e.g residents in nursing homes or children in nurseries, you should stay away from work until you have been symptom free for at least 2 days. You should also notify your employer and comply with any company rules regarding clearance to return to work.

If you would like any further information, please contact:

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