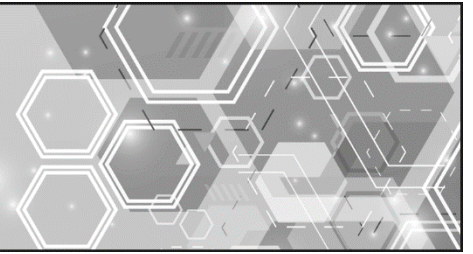




Durham Region Health Department **Facts about...**



Cryptosporidiosis

What is it?

Cryptosporidiosis is a gastrointestinal illness caused by microscopic parasites called *Cryptosporidium*. It forms cysts called oocysts (pronounced “o-o-sists”) which can live in harsh environmental conditions. They occur in most surface water sources such as lakes and rivers. Children are infected more often during outdoor swimming season.

Cryptosporidiosis is a disease of public health significance and must be reported to the Health Department.

How is it spread?

Cryptosporidia live in the gut of many animals. Oocysts are in the stool of infected animals and people, and can live in a moist environment for 2-6 months. Water run-off from farmland washes oocysts into lakes, rivers and streams. Using waterslides, swimming in pools or lakes are some of the common ways you can be exposed to the parasite. Contact with animal or human feces can also lead to illness if hands are not washed. Drinking water or eating foods such as fruit and vegetables that have the parasite can also make you sick. Raspberries, basil, and lettuce, have been linked to many outbreaks. All drinking water supplied by Durham Region is treated to remove *Cryptosporidium*.

What do I look for?

You may start to feel sick within 2-14 days, but usually 7 days after the parasite enters your body. It may take you a few days to a few weeks to feel better. You may have watery diarrhea, stomach pain, loss of appetite and weight loss. Nausea, vomiting and low fever may occur but are less common.

Babies, older people, and people with weak immune systems (e.g., HIV/AIDS, cancer, organ and bone marrow transplant patients) may get sicker. It is harder to treat people with these conditions. See your doctor if you are feeling sick for a long time.

How is it treated?

Treatment in most cases is not needed. If you are vomiting and have diarrhea, you should drink a lot of fluid. Fluids with water, sugar and salts (such as sport drinks) can help prevent dehydration.

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905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 | durham.ca/health

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



How can I protect myself?

- Wash your hands well, with warm running water and soap, rubbing together for at least 15 seconds, after using the washroom, changing diapers, before eating and preparing foods.
- If you have diarrhea, do not handle food for others until diarrhea has stopped for 24 hours.
- Practice safer sex including avoiding anal-oral contact with sexual partner(s).
- Do not drink untreated water from lakes, streams, and rivers.
- If you are unsure of how safe your drinking water is, bring to a full boil for one minute.
- Use a filter for water from non-municipal sources with a micron rating of less than 1 (called “Absolute”) to remove *Cryptosporidium* oocysts. You should use gloves to avoid touching the filters.
- A reverse osmosis or distillation water treatment device can also be used. Oocysts are not killed by chlorine treatment.
- Check the manufacturer’s instructions for water treatment systems you are using to make sure you are using it and maintaining it right. Look for a logo from the National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) on the product. This symbol shows that the product has been tested and the claims of the manufacturer are correct.
- Avoid using public recreational waters such as swimming pools and splash pads until two weeks after you feel better.
- Shower before entering a swimming pool and avoid swallowing water.
- Babies and toddlers should wear special swim diapers or pants when using public swimming pools or hot tubs.
- Use treated water to wash or rinse fresh fruit and vegetables before eating.
- Thoroughly cook and reheat all food derived from animal sources.

More information can be obtained from

Durham Health Connection Line 905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729

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