



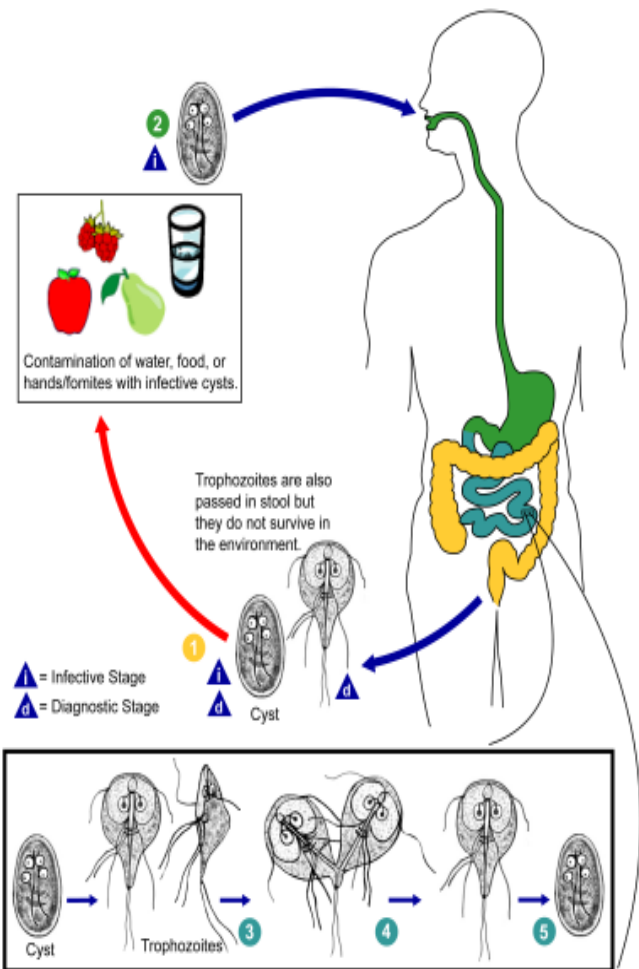
Giardia

Facts about Giardia

Giardia is an infection caused by a parasite called *Giardia lamblia*. People infected with giardia may be asymptomatic (having no signs of illness) or may have a variety of symptoms. Symptoms may include:

- Bloating, gas, belching
- Diarrhea or loose stools (usually foul smelling)
- High abdominal pains
- Stomach cramps
- Loss of appetite, weight loss, dehydration
- Nausea, vomiting
- Low grade fever (unusual)
- Poor weight gain if person is under five years old

Symptoms generally begin 1-2 weeks after someone is infected. Giardia lives in the intestines of infected humans and animals. Giardia is diagnosed by a laboratory test of the stool. People of all ages are at risk.



The Spread of Giardia

Giardia can be spread by

- putting something in your mouth or accidentally swallowing something that has come in contact with the stool of a person or animal infected with giardia.
- swallowing water contaminated with giardia.
- eating uncooked food contaminated with giardia.

Treatment for Giardia

Giardia is treated with prescription drugs ordered by a physician.

Giardia may often go away by itself, but if symptoms keep occurring the person should be seen by a doctor.

Other treatment

Do not use over-the-counter medicines to stop the diarrhea and other symptoms. It is better to allow the parasite to travel through the body and leave the body in the stool.



Do not prepare or serve food if you have diarrhea. Do not go to work in food service, childcare settings, or health care if you have diarrhea.

How to Protect Yourself and Your Family from Giardia

Practice good hygiene

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after using the toilet.
- Wash hands before and after handling or eating food.
- Wash hands after every diaper change.
- Do not swim, or allow children to swim, if experiencing diarrhea.


Avoid water that might be contaminated

- Do not swallow recreational water.
- Avoid drinking untreated water from wells, lakes, ponds, and streams.
- Do not use ice or drink untreated water when traveling in countries where the water supply may not be safe.
- If you are unsure about drinking water, boil it for at least 1 minute.


Wash hands after handling animals or cleaning up animal feces

- Both wild animals and pets may be infected with giardia.
- Animals with giardia may have gas, diarrhea, and weight loss.


How to wash hands well



Rub both hands on the top and bottom with soap for 20 seconds.



Use paper towels or clean terry cloth towels for drying.



Use the paper towel to turn off the water faucet in a public place.

Wash hands carefully after using the bathroom or changing diapers. Clean toilet with disinfectant. Clean toilet handle and faucets. Keep towels clean.

Giardia Infection is a Reportable Illness

If you or your child are diagnosed with giardia, your doctor will give a report to the County Health and Human Services Agency. You may be contacted to find out how you got infected. This helps prevent the illness from spreading to others.

For more information about this illness, see the website for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov.

To report Giardia in San Diego County, call (619) 515-6620.

