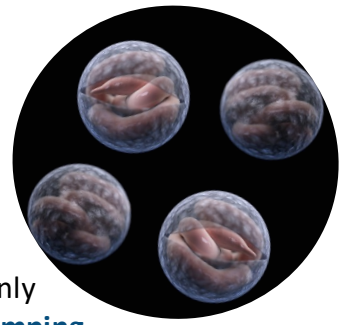


CRYPTOSPORIDIOSIS (*CRYPTOSPORIDIUM*)



What is cryptosporidiosis and what are the symptoms?

Cryptosporidiosis is an infectious disease caused by a parasite called *Cryptosporidium* that is too small to be seen without a microscope. The disease and parasite are commonly called **Crypto**. Most people infected with Crypto develop **watery diarrhea, stomach cramping, nausea, and weight loss**. Symptoms typically start **seven days** after ingesting the parasite but can range from 2 to 10 days. Sometimes people infected with Crypto have no symptoms at all.

How long does it last?

Most people with Crypto typically feel better in **1 to 2 weeks**, but some symptoms like diarrhea can relapse or last up to a month or longer. Those with healthy immune systems can recover with extra fluids and rest. Some people with severe symptoms may need to be hospitalized.

How does it spread?

Crypto lives in the intestines of infected people and animals. It sheds in their stools (feces) while they have diarrhea and can continue to stay in their stools for weeks after the diarrhea has stopped. Crypto spreads through the following ways:

- **Recreational Water:** Swallowing water contaminated with infected stool while swimming or playing in pools.
- **Water and Food:** Drinking water, unpasteurized (raw) apple cider or milk, or eating uncooked foods contaminated with Crypto.
- **Person-to-person contact:** Exposure to stool or soiled fingers of a person infected with Crypto to the mouth of another person.
- **Animal contact:** Handling infected animals such as calves, lambs, baby goats, and pigs (Crypto affects a wide variety of animals but these are high-risk).

How can I prevent Crypto infections?

Wash your hands with soap and water before and after handling or eating foods, having contact with animals or their environment, and after using the bathroom or changing a diaper.



Avoid swallowing water from ponds, rivers, lakes, and even swimming pools because Crypto can survive in chlorinated water. **Take children on frequent bathroom breaks** while playing in recreational water to prevent accidents. If you have diarrhea, **do not swim** for two weeks until after diarrhea has resolved.



Avoid raw dairy and apple cider, and thoroughly **wash produce items** under clean running water before eating, cutting, or cooking.



Avoid sexual activity that involves anal exposures with people who have or recently had diarrhea, and if you have diarrhea, wait until your symptoms have resolved.



If you think you might have Crypto, contact your health care provider. Visit www.dph.illinois.gov or contact your [local health department](#) for more information.