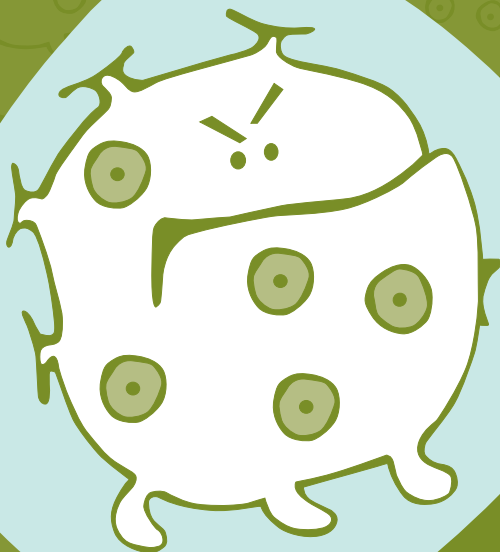


cryptosporidium

Prevent this food and water-borne disease.



Cryptosporidium (pronounced crip-toe-spor-idium) is a parasite found in the gut of birds, fish, reptiles (eg, geckos and turtles), humans and animals such as cattle, sheep, cats and dogs.

It is passed on in the faeces (poo, tūtae) of infected animals and humans.

Cryptosporidium is widespread in New Zealand and the parasites can live in the environment for long periods, especially in lake, river, stream and roof water.

How does a person become infected?

People become infected when they swallow the parasites. This may be from contaminated water and food, or from contact with infected animals or humans.

The signs and symptoms of the illness

Cryptosporidium may cause:

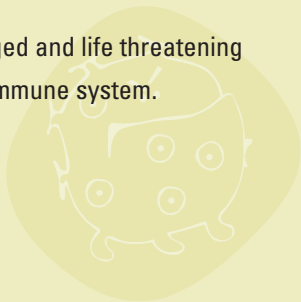
- diarrhoea (often watery)
- stomach cramps and abdominal pain
- lack of appetite
- weight loss.

More rarely:

- nausea and vomiting
- fever
- flatulence (wind)
- fatigue.

The illness:

- The symptoms appear between two and 14 days (usually seven) after becoming infected.
- The illness may last for two weeks or more.
- The faeces may remain infectious for several weeks after the symptoms have gone.
- Some people may be infected but not develop any symptoms at all.
- The infection may be prolonged and life threatening to people with a weakened immune system.



Treatment of Cryptosporidiosis

- For advice and testing you will need to visit your doctor.
- The doctor may request a faecal specimen and give you a specimen jar, as a laboratory test may be needed.
- Currently there is no effective treatment for cryptosporidiosis. However, the doctor may prescribe medication to help relieve symptoms.
- Drink plenty of safe fluids while the diarrhoea lasts, to prevent dehydration. Follow your doctor's instructions.
- Go back to your doctor if your child is not drinking.
- If you have cryptosporidium infection the doctor is required to report this to the Medical Officer of Health of the Public Health Service (PHS). The PHS may contact you to find out how you picked up the parasite. This helps to prevent more outbreaks of the illness.

Taking time off work or school

Usually people can go back to work and children can return to early childhood centres and school when the symptoms are gone. However, as cryptosporidiosis is a notifiable disease you will need to check with your doctor or Public Health Service first.

If you are working with food, or employed in a hospital, rest home, school or early childhood centre you may be required to stay away from work until you are tested free from cyptosporidium infection.

How to avoid getting cryptosporidium and passing it on to others

Washing hands

Wash your hands thoroughly by using plenty of soap, cleaning under fingernails, rinsing hands well and drying on a clean towel:

- before and after preparing food
- after going to the toilet or changing a baby's nappy
- after caring for people with cryptosporidiosis
- after playing or working with animals especially dairy cattle and calves
- after gardening.

It is best to avoid preparing food for other people if you have cryptosporidium infection but if you have to, wash your hands carefully.

Water in rural areas

- Drinking water taken from the roof, rivers, lakes etc, should be boiled for one minute or an approved filter (Standard AS/NZS4348: 1995) should be used.
- When using roof water, spouting should be cleaned regularly and roofs kept clear of bird and animal droppings.
- Avoid placing TV aerials on the roof for birds to perch on and avoid planting trees close to the house to prevent animals from getting on to the roof.

When you visit a swimming pool:

- take your children to the toilet before they swim and then wash hands
- shower yourself and your children using soap (particularly in the area around the bottom) before entering the pool
- ensure any young children swim in tight fitting togs, not nappies, to prevent faecal matter from entering the pool. Wash your hands after changing the baby
- report any faecal accidents (poo in the water) to the pool attendant immediately
- avoid swallowing pool water.

No-one should go swimming in a pool if they have diarrhoea. Wait until at least two weeks after the symptoms have gone.

Help keep the environment free of cryptosporidium when camping and tramping

- Use toilets when they are provided.
- When no toilets are provided bury toilet waste and paper. Make sure you bury it at least 50 metres away from any water source such as rivers and lakes.
- Do not wash your hands directly in the water. Collect water, wash your hands in it and then drain it into the ground away from the water source.



Washing hands in
hot soapy water and
drying them with a
clean towel will help
prevent the spread
of **cryptosporidium**.



This resource is available from www.healthed.govt.nz
or the Authorised Provider at your local DHB.



MANATŪ HAUORA