

Giardiasis



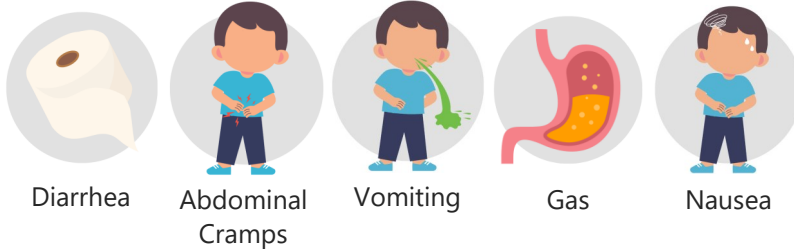
Infectious Disease
Epidemiology &
Prevention Division

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What is giardiasis?

Giardiasis (Jee-aar-dai-uh-suhs) is a diarrheal illness caused by the parasite, Giardia (Jee-aar-dee-uh). Giardia is found in soil, food or water that has been contaminated with the stool (feces) from an infected person or animal. If a person or animal becomes infected with Giardia, the parasite lives in the intestines and can be passed in feces. Giardia is shown to have a protective outer shell that contributes to its survival for weeks or even months. With Giardia having a high survival rate, it can spread very easily since this parasite can contaminate anything

What are the symptoms?



How long do symptoms last?

- Symptoms normally begin around seven to 10 days
- Sickness can occur anywhere from three to 25 days after consuming the parasite
- They can last for two to six weeks
- Symptoms can often go away but may come back if untreated

How do I know if I have giardiasis?

Giardiasis infections are normally diagnosed through laboratory testing of stool, intestinal fluid, or intestinal biopsy specimens. Multiple stool specimens may be required, as it can be difficult to detect *Giardia*.

How is giardiasis treated?

Though *Giardia* symptoms can go away on their own without treatment, there are times when antibiotic treatment is needed for persistent infections or those who are at high risk. High risk individuals include infants and those with weakened immune systems. Over-the-counter drugs may relieve symptoms but will not get rid of the parasite. If symptoms persist, it is important to seek medical care for proper treatment to reduce further issues.

How does it spread?

Infected animals or people can pass the parasite via their stool. Infection occurs primarily via:



Swallowing contaminated water



Person-to-person contact



Touching contaminated objects or surfaces

How can it be prevented?

1

Practice good hand hygiene by washing your hands after using the restroom, changing a diaper, before and after preparing food, and after caring for animals.

2

Avoid swallowing water from swimming pools, splash pads, hot tubs, rivers, or lakes. Always prepare food properly including separating raw and cooked foods.

3

Practice safe sex. If recovering from *Giardia* infection avoid having sex for several weeks.

For more information, visit the
Indiana Department of Health
[giardiasis webpage](https://www.in.gov/health/giardiasis).

