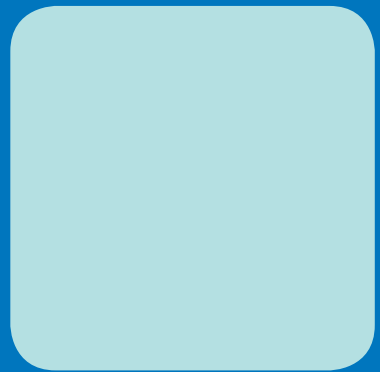
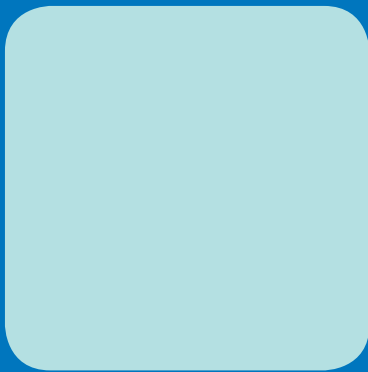


Giardiasis



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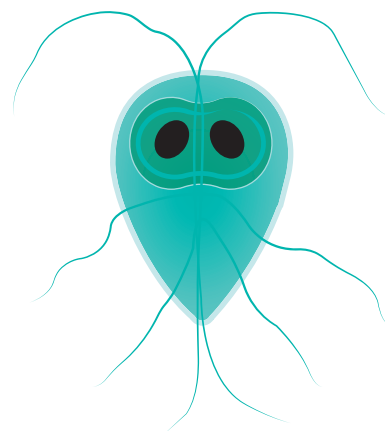
Giardiasis



Giardia lamblia is a parasite (a tiny organism) which can grow in the intestines of infected humans or animals and cause an illness called Giardiasis.

It causes diarrhoea which is often very smelly with cramping stomach ache and wind. The illness may last for several weeks, it then resolves slowly sometimes over several more weeks.

The incubation period, the delay between infection and the appearance of symptoms is 5 to 25 days.



Who can it affect?

Anyone. It is one of the most common parasitic human diseases globally. In the UK it is most common in children under five years old and young adults. The illness can be more severe and prolonged in people with impaired immune systems.

What is the treatment?

If you have diarrhoea, drink plenty of fluids. Giardiasis is one of the few stomach bugs where antibiotics help, which your GP can prescribe. It is important that you don't drink alcohol whilst you are undergoing treatment.

How do you catch it?

- By swallowing the parasite that has been passed from the bowel of another person who already has the infection; this can happen especially if sanitation or hygiene is poor.
- By 'person to person' spread; spread is common within families, so good personal and environmental hygiene is very important.
- From drinking untreated water which contains the parasite; this will most likely happen whilst you are abroad, and Giardia is one of the causes of traveller's diarrhoea.
- From contact with pets and animals that are infected, usually through poor hand washing.

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How do you avoid spreading it?

Good general personal and domestic cleanliness is important in helping prevent the spread of the infection.

Handwashing is the most important way to stop the spread of infections.

Ensure you and all household members wash their hands thoroughly with warm running water and soap and that they dry their hands thoroughly on a clean towel:

- After using or cleaning the toilet.
- Before eating, preparing or serving food/drinks.
- After attending to another person who has diarrhoea/vomiting.
- After changing a baby's nappy.
- After handling or washing soiled clothes and bedding.
- When your hands have been contaminated with any bodily fluids.

Ensure each person affected has an individual clean towel for drying their hands. Ensure young children are supervised when washing hands, or have their hands washed for them.

When washing soiled linen, the following advice is applicable:

- For any items/clothes soiled with faeces or vomit, any 'solids' should be carefully put down the toilet and flushed away.
- Soiled linen should be washed separately in the washing machine using a pre-wash if possible and on the hottest temperature possible.
- Do not use the half wash button or the rapid wash function.
- Use a biological washing powder whenever possible.
- Do not overload the washing machine.
- Wipe down the outside surface of the washing machine after loading with hot soapy water and a disposable cloth.
- You may wish to run an empty hot (90°C) cycle to 'wash through' your machine if you have washed heavily soiled items.

When cleaning, pay particular attention to the toilet bowl and seat (surface and underneath) as well as taps, flush handles and surrounding area and surfaces that may have been contaminated by germs.

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Clean toilet seats, flush handles, basins and taps more frequently than normal with warm soapy water. The toilet bowl should be cleaned with a toilet brush and disinfectant. Wear rubber gloves to clean the toilet and keep them for this purpose only.

If you are using a disinfectant, ensure that it confirms to a British Standard and follow the manufacturer's instructions. Keep all chemical cleaning agents in a safe place away from children.

Do not prepare food for your family or anyone else while you are ill.

Do not go swimming until you have been free from diarrhoea for at least two weeks.

How do you avoid catching it?

In situations where water is not available e.g. on picnics, be aware that hand gels may not be effective against Giardia. You should thoroughly wash your hands using soap and water at the earliest opportunity.

Only drink water from safe sources, if not sure, boil it first. Avoid drinking untreated water e.g. from streams and lakes.

Take extra care on visits to farms or the countryside and wash hands thoroughly afterwards.

Keep pets away from food, dishes and worktops.

Do you need to stay off work, school or nursery?

Yes, until you have been completely free from any diarrhoea symptoms for 48 hours.

Children should not play with other children or attend school or nursery until they are fully recovered and have been symptom free for 48 hours.

If you work as a food handler, with young children or in healthcare, you must inform your employer and/or seek advice from your local Environmental Health Department.

Public Health England, Environmental Health Team and Giardia

Public Health England is an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care who provide advice on controlling outbreaks of infectious diseases. Their work involves trying to identify the source of infections to prevent other people becoming infected. They also monitor outbreaks and look for patterns and trends. This work is undertaken with assistance from local Environmental Health Teams within councils. These teams are notified of infectious diseases by Pathology laboratories and contact patients to obtain as much information about their illness as possible to try to identify how the infection was acquired, offer advice and prevent the spread of illness.

If you would like further information, please contact the Food & Public Protection Team at Carlisle City Council on **01228 817329**.