

Cryptosporidiosis (krip-toe-spoe-RID-e-oh-sis) is a disease caused by protozoa parasites—a kind of germ. These germs are found in food, soil and water. Both the germs and the disease they cause are often called “crypto”.

HOW IT SPREADS

The germs that cause crypto are found in the stool (poop) of an infected person or animal. According to the Centers for Disease Control, there can be millions of crypto germs in one bowel movement (poop). Swallowing as few as 10 can make you sick.

You can get infected with crypto by:

- Swallowing water from contaminated swimming pools, fountains, rivers and lakes
- Drinking untreated water, unpasteurized (raw) milk or apple cider and other drinks that are contaminated.
- Eating contaminated food that is not fully cooked
- Having oral-anal sex with an infected person
- Touching your mouth with hands that have not been washed well after
 - Touching things that have crypto germs on them (toys, diaper changing tables, diaper pails, faucets)
 - Changing diapers of an infected child
 - Touching or cleaning up after an infected animal.

SYMPTOMS

- Diarrhea (loose, watery poop)
- Stomach cramps or pain
- Nausea (upset stomach)
- Vomiting (throwing up)
- Fever
- Dehydration (loss of water and other body fluids)
- Weight loss without trying

Symptoms of crypto begin about a week after infection. Symptoms may come and go for up to a month. Some people with crypto don't have any symptoms.

TREATMENT

Most people get better without treatment. Call your doctor if you have watery diarrhea that lasts for more than a few days—especially if you have a weakened immune system (HIV/AIDS, cancer, transplant patients, etc.)

People with vomiting and diarrhea are more likely to become dehydrated (not enough fluid in the body). Dehydration is serious and may need special medical care—even more so for young children, babies, pregnant women and others whose immune systems are weakened (call your doctor).

If you have vomiting or diarrhea, be sure to replace the fluids you lose. You can do this by drinking lots of water, making a drink that is half water and half juice or soda (without caffeine) or drinking an oral rehydration fluid. Oral rehydration fluid is a mixture of salts and sugar mixed with water that replaces lost minerals (ask your pharmacist).

Crypto can cause serious problems for people with weakened immune systems. These problems include thinness and weakness caused by loss of body mass, not being able to get nutrition from food and inflammation of the gallbladder, liver (hepatitis) or pancreas.

HOW TO PREVENT CRYPTO—READ THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS PAGE

These tips can help prevent crypto in most people. If you have a weakened immune system, visit the CDC website http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/crypto/gen_info/prevent_ic.html or call your doctor to find out other things you should do to keep from getting crypto.

- Hand washing
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water to prevent crypto and many other diseases.
 - Read “MORE ABOUT HANDWASHING” below.
 - **Hand sanitizers made with alcohol don’t kill crypto.**
- Pools
 - Don’t swallow pool water.
 - Protect others—don’t swim if you have diarrhea. Do not swim for at least 2 weeks after diarrhea stops.
 - Take young children for bathroom breaks often (at least every hour). Check diapers every 30-60 minutes.
- Food
 - Wash, peel or cook raw fruits and vegetables before eating.
- Outdoors
 - Don’t drink untreated water from lakes, rivers, springs, ponds, streams or shallow wells.
- Sex
 - Use barriers during oral-anal sex (condoms, dental dams, condoms that have been cut open).
 - Wash hands right away after touching the anal area or barriers used during anal sex.

MORE ABOUT HANDWASHING

How to Wash



1. Wet



2. Soap



3. Scrub 15–20 seconds



4. Rinse



5. Dry



6. Use towel to turn off faucet

WHEN TO WASH

- Before and after eating
- Before, during and after making and touching food
- After using the bathroom or helping a child use the bathroom
- After changing or checking a diaper
- After coughing, sneezing, blowing your nose and after wiping a child’s nose
- After touching blood or body fluids (urine, feces, vomit, etc.)
- After touching animals or their waste
- After touching trash
- After touching money
- After gardening or working in the dirt, even if you wear gloves
- Whenever hands look, feel or smell dirty