

# Cryptosporidiosis

© Department of Health, Government of South Australia. All rights reserved.

## Introduction

- > Cryptosporidiosis (commonly called 'crypto') is a diarrhoeal disease caused by the microscopic parasite *Cryptosporidium parvum*
- > *Cryptosporidium* has a worldwide distribution
- > The parasite is protected by an outer shell that allows it to survive outside the body for long periods of time (it is very resistant to chlorine disinfection)

## Clinical symptoms

- > May be asymptomatic
- > *Cryptosporidium parvum* gastroenteritis (in immunocompetent patients is usually self-limiting within 14 days and requires no treatment) involves the following symptoms:
  - > Watery diarrhoea
  - > Abdominal cramps
  - > Slight fever
  - > Dehydration
- > In immunocompromised patients watery diarrhoea may be severe and prolonged

## Incubation period

- > 1 – 12 days

## Route of transmission

- > *Cryptosporidium parvum* can live in the intestine of animals or humans and is passed in the stool of an infected person or animal
- > Direct contact (ingestion) with food, water or soil contaminated with cryptosporidium parasites e.g. swallowing recreational water in swimming pools, fountains, lakes, rivers or streams
- > Swimming in contaminated water
- > Direct contact with surfaces contaminated with faeces of infected humans or animals

## Infection precautions

- > Standard precautions

## Diagnosis

- > Stool specimen for microscopy and sensitivity

# Cryptosporidiosis

© Department of Health, Government of South Australia. All rights reserved.

## Treatment

- > There is no consistently effective treatment
- > Encourage fluids to avoid dehydration
- > Anti-diarrhoeal medication should be avoided in pregnancy. However, codeine and dihydrocodeine are ADEC Category A medications and are therefore regarded as safe
- > Nitazoxamide 500mg orally, every 12 hours for 3 days. ADEC Category B medication. (This drug is not registered in Australia; available via Special Access Scheme: Tel: 02-6232 8111)

## References

1. Communicable Disease Control Branch. You've got what – specific conditions – cryptosporidiosis. Department of Health, Government of South Australia. Available from: URL: <http://www.dh.sa.gov.au/pehs/Youve-got-what/ygw-cryptosporidiosis-feb07.pdf>
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Parasitic disease information. Cryptosporidiosis. Division of Parasitic Diseases. [cited 2008 December 16] [4 screens]. Available from: URL: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites>

## Version control and change history

**PDS reference:** OCE use only

Version	Date from	Date to	Amendment
1.0	19 May 04	25 Jan 10	Original version
2.0	25 Jan 10	Current	Reviewed