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Cryptosporidiosis

Also called: Crypto

What is cryptosporidiosis?

Cryptosporidiosis is a contagious disease that causes watery diarrhea [<https://medlineplus.gov/diarrhea.html>]. It is caused by parasites called *Cryptosporidium*, or Crypto. These parasites live in soil, food, and water. They are found in every region of the United States and throughout the world. Crypto can also be found on surfaces or dirty hands that have been contaminated with the stool (poop) of humans or animals that have the infection.

How is cryptosporidiosis spread?

You can become infected with Crypto by swallowing the parasite if it is in your food, drinking water, or water that you swim in. You can also get infected when you touch something that has been contaminated, and then you touch your eyes, mouth, or nose. Another way that Crypto can spread is through sexual contact.

Who is more likely to get cryptosporidiosis?

Certain people are more likely to get Crypto; they include:

- Children and workers at childcare centers
- Older adults (ages 75 years and older)
- People who take care of other people with Crypto
- International travelers
- Backpackers, hikers, and campers who drink unfiltered, untreated water
- People, including swimmers, who swallow water from contaminated sources
- People who touch infected animals, often cows or sheep

What are the symptoms of cryptosporidiosis?

The most common symptom of cryptosporidiosis is watery diarrhea. Other symptoms include:

- Dehydration [<https://medlineplus.gov/dehydration.html>]
- Weight loss
- Stomach cramps or pain
- Fever [<https://medlineplus.gov/fever.html>]
- Nausea and vomiting [<https://medlineplus.gov/nauseaandvomiting.html>]

The symptoms generally begin 2 to 10 days after becoming infected with the parasite. In people with healthy immune systems [<https://medlineplus.gov/immunesystemanddisorders.html>], the symptoms can last about 1 to 2 weeks. Occasionally, the symptoms can last longer or come and go for up to 30 days.

People with weakened immune systems may develop a serious, chronic illness. Some reasons why you might have a weakened immune system could include:

- Having HIV [<https://medlineplus.gov/hivandinfections.html>]

- Having cancer [<https://medlineplus.gov/cancer.html>]
- Having a genetic condition [<https://medlineplus.gov/geneticdisorders.html>] that affects the immune system
- Taking certain medicines, such as chemotherapy [<https://medlineplus.gov/cancerchemotherapy.html>] and medicines needed after an organ transplant [<https://medlineplus.gov/organtransplantation.html>]

Some people may not have any symptoms at all.

Contact your health care provider if you have watery diarrhea that lasts more than a few days, especially if you have a weakened immune system.

How is cryptosporidiosis diagnosed?

Cryptosporidiosis is diagnosed by examining stool samples, usually under a microscope. People with Crypto can have many parasites in their stool one day but not as many the next day. So you may need to give the lab three stool samples collected on three different days. This helps make sure that your diagnosis is correct.

What are the treatments for cryptosporidiosis?

Most people with cryptosporidiosis get better without treatment. It usually takes about one to two weeks. It's important to drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration if you are pregnant. Infants and young children should also get extra fluids. They should get extra fluids. If you are pregnant or if you think that you or your child are severely dehydrated, contact your provider about how to get enough fluids. Some people who are dehydrated may need to get intravenous (IV) fluids in a hospital.

Over-the-counter anti-diarrheal medicine might help slow down diarrhea, but do not take it without first asking your provider. There is a medicine to treat diarrhea caused by Crypto in people with healthy immune systems. You and your provider can talk about whether that medicine is right for you.

Can cryptosporidiosis be prevented?

To lower your chance of getting or spreading Crypto:

- Wash your hands [<https://medlineplus.gov/germsandhygiene.html>] often with soap and water, especially after using the toilet, changing diapers, or touching animals. You also need to wash your hands before eating or preparing food. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are not effective against Crypto.
- Only drink water that you know is safe.
- Only drink milk and apple cider that have been pasteurized.
- Don't eat uncooked foods when traveling in countries where the food supply might be unsafe.
- Never go swimming when you have diarrhea.
- Don't swallow water when you go swimming.
- Use condoms or dental dams every time you have sex. This will also help prevent other sexually transmitted infections [<https://medlineplus.gov/sexuallytransmittedinfections.html>] .

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Start Here

- About Crypto Infections [<https://www.cdc.gov/cryptosporidium/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Diagnosis and Tests

- Clinical Testing and Diagnosis for Crypto [<https://www.cdc.gov/cryptosporidium/hcp/diagnosis-testing/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Ova and Parasite Test [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/ova-and-parasite-test/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/prueba-de-huevos-y-parasitos/>]

Prevention and Risk Factors

- About Choosing Home Water Filters [<https://www.cdc.gov/drinking-water/prevention/about-choosing-home-water-filters.html>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- How Crypto (Cryptosporidium) Spreads [<https://www.cdc.gov/cryptosporidium/causes/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Preventing Crypto During a Boil Water Advisory [<https://www.cdc.gov/cryptosporidium/prevention/crypto-home-boil-water.html>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Treatments and Therapies

- Treating Crypto [<https://www.cdc.gov/cryptosporidium/treatment/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Related Issues

- Parasites and Foodborne Illness [<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/foodborne-illness-and-disease/pathogens/parasites-and-foodborne-illness>] (Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service)

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Cryptosporidiosis [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Cryptosporidiosis%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Anti-Cryptosporidium efficacy of BKI-1708, an inhibitor of Cryptosporidium calcium-dependent protein kinase... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40737275>]
- Article: Targeting translation initiation yields fast-killing therapeutics against the zoonotic parasite Cryptosporidium... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40720562>]
- Article: STAT1-IFITM3 promotes autophagy in epithelial cells to control Cryptosporidium parvum infection. [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40681213>]
- Cryptosporidiosis -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Cryptosporidiosis%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bdat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Find an Expert

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [<https://www.cdc.gov/>] Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/spanish/>]
- National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases [<https://www.niaid.nih.gov/>] 

Patient Handouts

- Cryptosporidium enteritis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000617.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia) Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000617.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Cryptosporidium enteritis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000617.htm>]

Related Health Topics

Drinking Water [<https://medlineplus.gov/drinkingwater.html>]

Parasitic Diseases [<https://medlineplus.gov/parasiticdiseases.html>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Cryptosporidiosis* is the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases [<http://www.niaid.nih.gov/>]

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