



## *Giardia* infection

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### What is *Giardia* infection?

*Giardia* infection causes an illness called Giardiasis. This is an intestinal infection caused by a single-celled parasite called *Giardia lamblia/intestinalis*.

In Western Australia, most cases involve infants and children less than five years of age.

### How do you get *Giardia* infection?

You can get *Giardia* infection by putting anything in your mouth that has been directly or indirectly contaminated with animal or human faeces containing *Giardia*.

Examples of potential sources of *Giardia* contamination are:

- rivers, streams, springs, ponds, lakes, swimming pools
- uncooked food, fruit and vegetables
- surfaces of toys, bathroom fixtures, nappy changing tables
- person to person contact between young children
- sexual activities (oral-anal sex).

### What are the signs and symptoms of *Giardia* infection?

The following symptoms usually appear between 7 - 10 days from the time of exposure:

- foul smelling greasy or watery diarrhoea
- abdominal cramps
- nausea
- fatigue
- bloating
- loss of appetite.

### How do I get treated?

- Drink plenty of fluids such as plain water or oral rehydration drinks (available from pharmacies).
- Antibiotics are usually required. Consult your GP or a doctor of your choice.
- Avoid anti-vomiting or anti-diarrhoeal medications unless prescribed or recommended by a doctor.



## What do I do if I have *Giardia* infection?

- Do not go to work for at least 24 hours after symptoms have stopped.
- Do not handle or prepare food for the family or household for at least 24 hours after symptoms have stopped.
- Keep children home from school for at least 24 hours after symptoms have stopped.
- People in hospitals, nursing homes and other residential facilities should be nursed in their own room, with a private bathroom for at least 24 hours after symptoms have stopped.
- Immediately remove and wash any clothes or bedding contaminated with vomit or diarrhoea using soap and hot water.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces immediately after an episode of illness by using a bleach-based household cleaner.

## How do I reduce the risks of getting *Giardia* infection?

- Consult your GP or a doctor of your choice about protecting yourself against *Giardia* before travelling overseas.
- Wash hands with soap and water after changing nappies and before preparing or handling food or drinks. To wash your hands effectively, lather thoroughly with soap and running water for at least 15 seconds. Dry your hands with a clean single use towel (e.g. paper towel) and turn the tap off with the towel to avoid possible recontamination.
- If hand washing facilities are not available then use an alcohol-based gel.
- Make sure foods are thoroughly cooked.
- Do not enter a swimming pool or spa until you are symptom free for at least 24 hours.

## Where can I find more information on *Giardia* infection?

For further information contact your GP, a doctor of your choice or Health Direct (1800 022 222).

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[http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/2/598/2/giardia\\_infecti.pm](http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/2/598/2/giardia_infecti.pm)

