

PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET



HEALTH DIVISION
Department of Health & Human Services

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Giardia

What is Giardia?

Giardia is a gastrointestinal disease caused by a bug (parasite) that gets into the intestines.

What are the symptoms of Giardia?

A person with this disease may have:

- diarrhea - often it is yellow, frothy and smells worse than usual
- it is common to have diarrhea one day and constipation the next day
- a lot of gas
- stomach aches
- vomiting
- little or no appetite
- fever
- headache
- signs may come and go. Some people may have the disease with no signs at all.

How can I find out if I have Giardia?

The only way to find out if you have this disease is to see your doctor. The doctor may ask you to bring a sample of your stool to be checked for the Giardia bug or eggs.

How is Giardia spread?

The parasite forms cysts that are passed out of the body with the bowel movement. These cysts can be spread to others by people who do not wash their hands after having bowel movements and/or after changing soiled diapers.

What should I do if I have Giardia?

If you have this disease the doctor will give you a special medicine to take. Make sure that you take all of the medicine. **DO NOT STOP TAKING THE MEDICINE EVEN IF YOU FEEL BETTER.** Check back with your doctor after the medicine is gone to make sure that you are cured. If you or anyone in your family is diagnosed with this disease, **ALL** members of the family should be checked by your doctor for the Giardia bug. **Make sure that ALL members of your family wash their hands after having bowel movements or changing soiled diapers.**

Prompt and proper treatment will help stop the spread of the Giardia bug to other family members and will speed up your cure.

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HAND WASHING INSTRUCTIONS:

- use soap and running water
- rub your hands vigorously for 20 seconds
- wash all surfaces, including:
 - backs of hands
 - wrists
 - between fingers
 - under fingernails
- rinse well
- dry hands with a paper towel
- turn off the water using a paper towel instead of bare hands

For more information on Giardia, call (248) 858-1406 or toll free 1 (800) 848-5533.

For additional copies, visit our website at www.oakgov.com/health or contact: