

CRYPTOSPORIDIOSIS

****Reportable to local or state health department****

Consult the health department before posting/distributing Parent/Guardian fact sheet.

CAUSE Cryptosporidium, a parasite.

SYMPTOMS Frequent watery diarrhea, vomiting, and low-grade fever that lasts for several days are the most common symptoms. Other symptoms include stomach cramps, loss of appetite, and weight loss. Illness usually lasts from 7 to 10 days but may last up to 30 days. Infected persons may have mild symptoms or may not have any symptoms at all.

In persons with weakened immune systems, it can cause very serious illness and even result in death.

SPREAD Cryptosporidium parasites leave the body through the stool of an infected person and enter another person when hands, food, or objects (such as toys) contaminated with stool are placed in the mouth.

Spread can occur when people do not wash their hands after using the toilet or changing diapers. Spread can occur through contact with infected pets and farm animals, particularly cattle.

INCUBATION It takes 2 to 14 days, usually about 7 days, from the time a person is infected until symptoms begin.

CONTAGIOUS PERIOD As long as Cryptosporidium is present in the stool, a person can pass the parasites on to other people. Cryptosporidium can be present in stool for at least 2 weeks after symptoms have stopped.

EXCLUSION Consult Health District. Additional testing may be required prior to readmission. Exclusion is necessary until Health Authority approves readmission.

Everyone with Cryptosporidium should not use swimming beaches, pools, water parks, spas, or hot tubs for 2 weeks after diarrhea has stopped.

Staff with Cryptosporidium may be restricted from working in high-risk duties, such as food service. Call your local health department to see if restrictions apply.

See also: [NAC 441A.505](#)

DIAGNOSIS Recommend parents/guardians call their healthcare provider if their child has symptoms. There is a lab test to detect Cryptosporidium in the stool.

TREATMENT An antiparasitic drug has been approved for treatment of children and adults with healthy immune systems; however, the majority of healthy persons who are infected with Cryptosporidium get better without any specific treatment. Vomiting and diarrhea may lead to dehydration, which may become a medical emergency. Ask a healthcare provider how to prevent dehydration.

PREVENTION/ CONTROL

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after using the toilet, changing diapers, and before preparing or eating food.
 - Thorough hand washing is the best way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases. Staff should closely monitor hand washing of all children after children have used the bathroom or have been diapered.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water immediately after handling pets and touching farm animals, particularly cattle.
- DO NOT swallow water when swimming in lakes, swimming pools, hot tubs, or fountains. Cryptosporidium can survive for days in swimming pools with adequate chlorine levels.
- Clean and disinfect diapering area and potty chairs after each use and bathroom toilets, sinks, and toys at least daily and when soiled.

DISINFECTING SOLUTIONS

Bleach solutions are not effective for inactivating the Cryptosporidium parasite. Mechanically cleaning surfaces by scrubbing with soap or detergent and water will help reduce germs.

Contact your local health department for disinfection recommendations if an outbreak of cryptosporidiosis occurs.

For more information, please contact your local health department.

[Southern Nevada Health District](#) (Clark County) 775-759-1300 (24 hours)

[Northern Nevada Public Health](#) (Washoe County) 775-328-2447 (24 hours)

[Carson City Health & Human Services](#) (Carson City, Douglas, Lyon Counties) 775-887-2190 (24 hours)

[Division of Public and Behavioral Health](#) (All other Counties) 775-400-0333 (24 hours)

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