

# Sheet: **Giardiasis**

## What is Giardiasis?

Giardiasis is a disease caused by a microscopic parasite that causes diarrheal illness. The Giardia parasite gets into the intestines, and lays eggs, which are then passed in feces via a bowel movement.

## What are the symptoms?

- Many loose, watery bowel movements that are yellow, frothy and smell worse than usual
- Diarrhea alternating with constipation
- Gas
- Stomach cramps
- Upset stomach or nausea
- Dehydration

Symptoms usually appear 1-3 weeks after becoming infected. Symptoms may last between 2-6 weeks.

## How is it spread?

People infected with the parasite who do not wash their hands after having a bowel movement or after changing the soiled diapers of an infected child can spread Giardia to others. Drinking contaminated water, such as untreated water from lakes and streams, can also transmit Giardia. Eating uncooked food that contains Giardia organisms can lead to infection as well.

## How is it treated?

If you have this disease, you will be given medicine to take. **Take all of the medicine as prescribed, even if you start to feel better.** If you or anyone in your family is diagnosed with this disease, **ALL** members of the family should be checked by your doctor for Giardia. It is also important to stay well hydrated, especially infants and pregnant women.

## Adults with Giardiasis should:

- Not prepare food.
- Wash hands for at least 20 seconds after using the toilet or changing soiled diapers.
- Put disposable diapers in a plastic bag and throw out in a tightly closed garbage can.
- Clean the bathroom after each use, including the toilet flushing handle, water faucets and doorknobs, with one tablespoon bleach per one gallon of water (make a fresh solution every day).
- Avoid water (drinking or recreational) that may be contaminated.
- Avoid eating food that may be contaminated.
- Prevent contact and contamination with feces during sex.

## Children with Giardiasis should:

- Wash their hands after using the toilet.
- Stay away from other children until they are well.
- Wash toys that can be put in a child's mouth after each child's use - with one tablespoon bleach per one gallon of water (make a fresh solution every day).
- Avoid water (drinking or recreational) that may be contaminated.
- Avoid eating food that may be contaminated.

## How is it prevented?

Prompt and proper treatment and the above personal hygiene measures will help to stop the spread of Giardia to others.

*This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self -diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information call your health care provider or call Wayne County Public Health at 734-727-7078.*