

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott
Governor

John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS
State Surgeon General & Secretary

Vision: To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

GIARDIASIS

Accompanying: Hand Washing Fact Sheet

What is Giardiasis?

Giardiasis is a communicable food borne disease infecting the intestinal system. It is caused by a parasite (giardia intestinal) and is diagnosed by examination of the stools.

What are the signs and symptoms of a Giardiasis infection?

Symptoms include acute watery diarrhea, stomach cramps, decreased appetite, weight loss, and gas. Symptoms can last 2-6 weeks.

How are Giardiasis infections spread?

Giardiasis is spread from person to person through hand-to-mouth contact and from ingestion of contaminated water or food. Children are infected more frequently than adults and it is a common occurrence in day care centers where diapers are changed or during water play. Though it may not cause symptoms for some people, they can still be carriers and pass it on to others.

What is the incubation period of Giardiasis and how long is it contagious?

On average, incubation period is 1-4 weeks. Symptoms appear between 7 to 10 days after exposure. Contagious period is highly variable, but can be months. It is most contagious during the diarrheal phase.

What should I do if I think I have a Giardiasis infection?

Persons with the above symptoms should see their physician. This diagnosis will be reported to the local Health Department by the diagnosing physician. Treatment usually is accomplished by one of several medications. Parents should **NOT** send their children to school or daycare until their symptoms have resolved. Infected patients should drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration

How can I prevent myself and others from getting a Giardiasis infection?

Giardia can be prevented by thoroughly washing hands, following the guidelines in the accompanying fact sheet, after each toilet use and diaper change and by sanitizing diaper changing areas after each use. Avoid permitting children to swallow water from splash pools, rivers, lakes, pools, Jacuzzis, or other recreational water sources.

For more information, please contact the Florida Department of Health in Orange County, Epidemiology Program at 407-858-1420. You may also visit the Epidemiology Program website, <http://orchd.com/generalHealth/epidemiology/index.asp>, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website, <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/giardia/>, or the DOH-Orange School Health website at <http://orchd.com/personalHealth/schoolHealth/index.asp> for additional information.

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