

West Virginia Department of Health & Human Resources

Information for the Public Regarding Giardiasis

What is giardiasis?

Giardiasis (gee-are-DYE-a-sis) is a disease caused by a parasite. It can live in the intestines of animals and people.

What are symptoms of giardiasis?

Diarrhea	Greasy stools that tend to float	Nausea
Gas	Stomach cramps	Weight loss

Some people may have no symptoms at all.

How is giardiasis spread?

The parasite is found in soil, food, water, or surfaces that have been contaminated with the feces from infected humans or animals.

- Giardiasis is most often spread from person to person on hands that have not been washed after using the bathroom. Many cases are spread in families and in child care settings.
- Drinking untreated water from lakes, ponds, and streams
- Oral-anal sex
- Contact with animals

How do I know if I have giardiasis?

You cannot tell without seeing your doctor. You may be asked to give the doctor a stool sample.

Can giardiasis be cured?

Yes, antibiotics can cure giardiasis. Over the counter drugs may relieve symptoms, but will not get rid of the parasite. You need to see a doctor to get the right treatment.

How can I protect myself and my family?

- Always wash hands after using the bathroom.
- Always wash hands after changing a diaper.
- Use child care centers that have excellent hygiene, including:
 - Staff washes hands after changing each diaper
 - Staff cleans changing area after each child
 - Children must wash hands often
 - Children must wash hands after using the toilet
- Be sure well or septic systems meet sanitation codes. If you do know, have water tested.
- Have dogs and cats checked for parasites by your vet. Also, have animals with diarrhea tested.
- If camping, use only public water supplies and drink only boiled or bottled drinks. Do not drink from lakes or streams, even if the water is clear.
- If traveling to areas where the water supply might be unsafe, it is recommended that you:
 - Eat only fruits and vegetables you wash or peel yourself;
 - Do not eat salads
 - Drink only boiled or bottled drinks
 - Do not use ice unless made with treated water