

Giardiasis

What is Giardiasis?

An intestinal infection caused by a parasite (*Giardia lamblia*)

What are the signs or symptoms?

- Acute watery diarrhea.
- Excessive gas (flatulence, passing gas from the bowel).
- Distended and painful abdomen.
- Decreased appetite.
- Weight loss.
- Individuals can be infected and infectious without signs or symptoms.

What are the incubation and contagious periods?

- Incubation period: 1–4 weeks
- Contagious period: Highly variable, but can be months

How is it spread?

- Fecal-oral route
- Ingestion of contaminated water or food

How do you control it?

- Practice careful and frequent hand washing (see “Hand Washing Steps” on page 17).
- Identify and treat family members, staff, and children who have symptoms.
- Exclude people with diarrhea until they are symptom free.
- Note: Treatment and exclusion of carriers is not effective for outbreak control.

What are the roles of the caregiver/teacher and the family?

- Report the infection to staff designated by the child care program or school for decision making and action related to care of ill children. That person, in turn, alerts possibly exposed family members and staff to watch for symptoms.
- Report the infection to the health department, as the health professional who makes the diagnosis may not report that the child who has the infection is a participant in a child

care program or school, and this could lead to precious time for controlling the spread of the disease being lost.

- Administer medication as prescribed.
- Emphasize sanitation and personal hygiene in the group care setting.
- Ensure that caregivers/teachers and children wash hands after toilet use or handling soiled diapers.
- Ensure that caregivers/teachers who care for diapered children do not prepare food for children outside their own group; try to arrange their duties with coworkers so that they do not participate in diaper changing until after they have completed their food preparation activities.

Exclude from group setting?

Yes, if

- Diarrhea is present.
- Note: For caregivers/teachers and children without symptoms (ie, recently recovered or exposed), testing stool cultures, treatment, and exclusion are not necessary.
- The child is unable to participate and staff determine that they cannot care for the child without compromising their ability to care for the health and safety of the other children in the group.

Readmit to group setting?

- Once diarrhea has resolved
- When the child is able to participate and staff determine that they can care for the child without compromising their ability to care for the health and safety of the other children in the group

Comments

- *Giardia* organisms are very common in the stools of young children in child care programs and schools.
- Outbreaks in group care settings may occur.

