

What is Giardia?

- It is a parasite which can cause illness.
- The parasite is found in the stool (bowel movement) of an infected person or animal.
- Parasites can pollute streams, lakes and ground water. This contaminated water is a common source of infection.

What are the symptoms?

After exposure, illness usually occurs within one to two weeks; however, it may take up to a month to get sick.

Illness may be mild or severe. Some people may not feel sick at all, but can still infect others.

Some symptoms are:

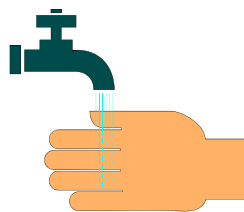
- Diarrhea
- Stomach cramps
- Nausea
- Bloating and gas
- Foul smelling, greasy stools that tend to float
- No desire to eat
- Weight loss

How is Giardia spread?

- Drinking contaminated water from lakes or streams.
- Not washing your hands after handling or caring for animals.
- By not washing your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers.
- Not washing your hands before fixing food, eating food or feeding others.
- Eating uncooked food contaminated with Giardia

How can you avoid getting Giardia?

Wash your hands with soap and water, especially:



- After using the toilet.
- After changing diapers.
- After handling animals.
- Wash and peel all raw vegetables and fruits before eating.

Clean and disinfect bathroom fixtures after use by the sick person.

- After cleaning you can use **1 TBS** (tablespoon) bleach in **1-gallon** cool or lukewarm water to disinfect.

Don't drink untreated water!

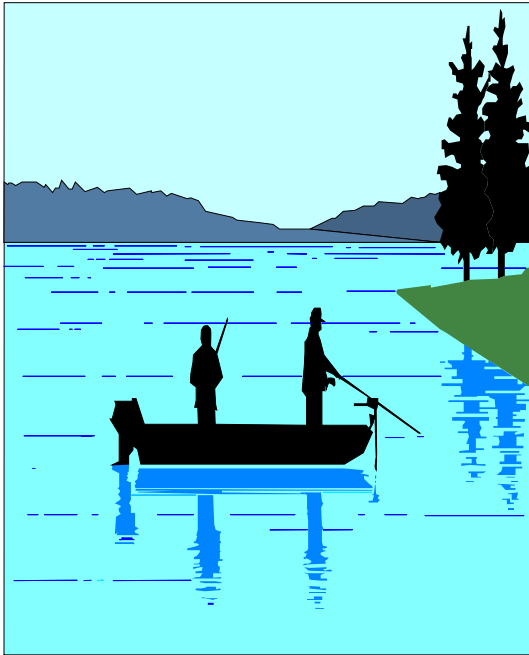
If you are unable to avoid using or drinking water that might be contaminated, then you can make the water safe to drink by doing one of the following:

- Heat the water to a rolling boil for at least 1 minute, OR
- Use a filter that has an absolute pore size of at least 1 micron or one that has been NSF rated for "cyst removal."
- If you cannot heat the water to a rolling boil or use a recommended filter, then try chemically treating the water by chlorination or iodination.

Using chemicals may be less effective than boiling or filtering because the amount of chemical required to make the water safe is highly dependent on the temperature, pH, and cloudiness of the water.

What else?

- **Food handlers, health care workers and childcare providers** with diarrhea should not work.
- **Keep your child home and inform your childcare provider** if your child has diarrhea.



Prevent Giardia

MCHD provides services without regard to race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age, marital status, mental or physical disability, political affiliation or sexual orientation.

If you have questions, call:



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