

# FACT SHEET

# Giardiasis

## What is giardiasis?

Giardiasis is a diarrheal illness that is caused by ingesting the parasite *Giardia*. *Giardia* can be found on surfaces or in soil, food and water that has been contaminated with feces.

## How is it spread?

Giardiasis can be spread in many different ways but is most commonly transmitted through water. Giardiasis can also be transmitted person-to-person by infected people who do not wash their hands after having a bowel movement or after changing soiled diapers.

## What are the symptoms?

Symptoms usually begin 1-2 weeks after exposure and can last 2-6 weeks. Treatment with prescription drugs can shorten the amount of time the symptoms last. Symptoms can include:

- Diarrhea
- Gas
- Foul-smelling, greasy stools (poop) that tend to float
- Stomach cramps or pain
- Upset stomach or nausea
- Vomiting
- Dehydration (loss of fluids)

*This fact sheet is for informational purposes only and is not intended for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information contact your health care provider or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).*

## How can it be prevented?

- Practice good hygiene and always wash your hands after going to the bathroom and before preparing food.
- Wash your hands after touching animals and minimize your contact with their poop.
- Do not drink water from streams or lakes.

## How is it treated?

If you have this disease, your doctor can prescribe medication. Make sure to finish the medicine completely. A stool sample may be tested after finishing your treatment to ensure you are free of parasites. Drink plenty of liquids to prevent dehydration due to diarrhea.

Prompt and proper treatment will help stop the spread of the parasite to other family members or in day care centers

Livingston County Health Department

2300 East Grand River Avenue, Suite 102, Howell, MI 48843 • 517-546-9850 • [www.LCHD.org](http://www.LCHD.org)