

Cryptosporidiosis

❑ WHAT IS IT?

- ✓ Cryptosporidiosis is an illness in which a parasite, *Cryptosporidium parvum*, is present in the intestinal tract. The parasite produces cysts (eggs) which are passed from the body in the stool (bowel movements). People with strong, healthy immune systems usually recover on their own. People with weak immune systems may have symptoms for longer periods and repeated illness episodes.

❑ SYMPTOMS

- ✓ Symptoms mostly consist of watery diarrhea, abdominal cramping, and lack of appetite.
- ✓ Sometimes symptoms include fever, nausea, vomiting, and headache.
- ✓ Many people may have a mild and brief diarrhea or no symptoms at all.

❑ HOW IS IT SPREAD?

- ✓ *Cryptosporidium* can be found naturally in lakes and streams. People who drink water from streams or lakes may swallow the cysts.
- ✓ *Cryptosporidium* can also spread from one person to another directly or via contaminated objects or food if the infected person does not wash their hands well after going to the bathroom. When others eat food or drink fluids contaminated with these cysts, they will become infected.
- ✓ Animals can have *Cryptosporidium* and pass it on to people who handle or clean up after the animal or when animal feces (bowel movements) contaminate water or food supplies.
- ✓ *Cryptosporidium* can be transmitted by sexual contact.

❑ DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

- ✓ Cryptosporidiosis is diagnosed in a laboratory by examining a stool sample. A health care provider must specifically request the lab for cryptosporidiosis.
- ✓ No drug is completely effective; however, some treatments are used for people with severe infections.
- ✓ Encourage the person to drink plenty of fluids to prevent fluid loss.

❑ PREVENTION

- ✓ Wash hands thoroughly after going to the bathroom, changing a diaper, before preparing meals, or eating. Wash with hot, soapy water. Keep bathrooms clean and supplied with soap and clean towels.
- ✓ Disinfect diapering areas, toys, and cribs.
- ✓ Discourage children from putting objects in their mouths. **Children who attend child care programs should be kept at home if they have diarrhea.**
- ✓ If someone else develops the symptoms, their stool should be checked for *cryptosporidium*.

❑ CRYPTOSPORIDIOSIS IN KING COUNTY

- ✓ No statistics exist about how often people get cryptosporidiosis in King County.
- ✓ Low numbers of *Cryptosporidium* cysts are found in the water supply of Seattle and King County. Health authorities do not know if there are enough of them to cause illness.
- ✓ Standard chlorine treatment does not eliminate them. Filtration or ozone treatment units may be added in the future to reduce the number of *cryptosporidium* in the water system.
- ✓ **People who have weakened immune systems should consider whether to boil their drinking water for at least 1 minute to protect their health or use personal water filters capable of removing particles of less than or equal to 1 Fm in size meeting the American National Standard Institute(ANSI/NSF, formerly National Sanitation Foundation) standard number 53.**

**Report all King County cases to
Public Health by calling (206) 296-4774.**

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