

Giardia (gee-ARE-dee-uh)

Protection Against Recreational Water Illnesses (RWIs)

What is *Giardia*?

Giardia is a germ that causes diarrhea. *Giardia* is found in infected people's stool and cannot be seen by the naked eye. This germ is protected by an outer shell that allows it to survive outside the body and in the environment for long periods of time.

Why should I be concerned about *Giardia*?

During the past two decades, *Giardia* has become recognized as one of the most common causes of waterborne illness (drinking water and recreational water) in the United States. The germ is found in every part of the United States and the world.



How is *Giardia* spread?

Giardia is not spread by contact with blood. *Giardia* can be spread by:

- Swallowing recreational water contaminated with *Giardia*. Recreational water is water from swimming pools, hot tubs, jacuzzis, fountains, lakes, rivers, springs, ponds, or streams that can be contaminated with sewage or feces from humans or animals.
- Accidentally swallowing something that has come in contact with the stool of a person or animal infected with *Giardia*.
- Swallowing *Giardia* picked up from surfaces (such as lounge chairs, picnic tables, bathroom fixtures, changing tables) contaminated with stool from an infected person.

How do I protect myself and my family?

Healthy Swimming behaviors are needed to protect you and your kids from recreational water illnesses and will help stop germs from getting in the pool in the first place. Here are six "PLEAs" that promote Healthy Swimming:

1. **PLEASE** don't swim when you have diarrhea.
2. **PLEASE** don't swallow the pool water.
3. **PLEASE** practice good hygiene.. Take a shower before swimming and wash your hands with soap and water after using the toilet or after changing diapers.
4. **PLEASE** take your child on bathroom breaks often.
5. **PLEASE** change diapers in a bathroom and not at poolside.
6. **PLEASE** wash your child thoroughly (especially the rear end) with soap and water before swimming.

For further information, visit our website at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/giardiasis/