

Giardia: Prevention



About Giardia

Giardiasis is a diarrheal illness, caused by *Giardia duodenalis*, a one-celled, microscopic protozoan parasite. You can get Giardia when you swallow tiny amounts of these parasites. The parasite spreads in the stool, or poop, of an infected person or animal. Because Giardia germs are in stool, anything contaminated by stool can potentially spread the germs. You can protect yourself and your loved ones from getting sick once you understand how to prevent the spread of Giardia germs.

Giardia transmission

Giardia is commonly transmitted by:

- Swallowing contaminated water when you swim or drink
- Contact with persons who are sick with giardiasis (especially in childcare settings)
- Swallowing Giardia organisms picked up from contaminated surfaces, such as changing tables, door handles, and toys
- Eating foods contaminated with the parasite
- Exposure to fecal material (poop) during sexual activity

Giardia prevention



People who have symptoms of giardiasis can reduce the risk of spreading their illness to others in several ways.

- Wash your hands
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you use the bathroom or change diapers and before you handle or eat food
 - Giardia germs can be found in soil, so wash hands with soap and water after gardening, field work, or landscaping even if you wear gloves
 - Do NOT bathe with others while you or they are sick
- Childcare facilities
 - Outbreaks can occur easily in childcare settings, so wash your hands often
 - Clean, sanitize, and disinfect surfaces and toys
 - Do NOT attend or work in a childcare setting if you are sick with Giardia
- Swimming areas
 - Stay out of pools, splash pads, and lakes while sick
 - Do NOT swallow water when you swim
 - Shower before you get in the water
 - Take young children on frequent bathroom breaks or for diaper checks every hour

- Around animals
 - Minimize contact with animal feces (poop), especially young animals
 - Do NOT touch your face or mouth after being near animals, and wash your hands as soon as possible after you touch animals or anything in the area where they live and roam
 - See the Giardia and pets infographic for more information
- Outdoor recreation
 - Do NOT drink untreated water from lakes, rivers, springs, ponds, or streams
 - If you must drink this water, make sure you boil it for at least 1 minute, treat it, or filter the water with a cyst and oocyst reduction certified filter
 - More information on how to prevent Giardia when you camp, backpack, and hike can be found [here](#)
- Traveling
 - Avoid tap water, fountain drinks, ice, and raw foods when you travel in countries with minimal water treatment and sanitation systems
 - More information on how to prevent Giardia when you travel can be found [here](#)
- Practice safer sex
 - If you engage in sexual practices that result in hand or mouth contact with stool, wash your hands, genitals, and anus with soap and water before and after sexual activity
 - Use barrier methods such as condoms and dental dams
 - Avoid sexual activity with those who have diarrhea or who have recently recovered from giardia

