

Fact Sheet

Preventing *Cryptosporidium* infection in the home

Cryptosporidiosis is a type of gastroenteritis (gastro) caused by the parasite *Cryptosporidium*. It is usually transmitted from person to person or animal to person. It can also occur when the parasites are ingested by consuming contaminated food or water.

This fact sheet provides information and advice on preventing the spread of cryptosporidiosis in the home.

What is cryptosporidiosis?

Cryptosporidiosis is an infection of the bowel caused by the microscopic parasite *Cryptosporidium*. The main symptom is watery diarrhoea, which occurs in conjunction with stomach cramps. Other symptoms can include fever, vomiting, nausea, and loss of appetite.

Symptoms can develop between one and twelve days after becoming infected with *Cryptosporidium*. Symptoms will usually last 1-2 weeks. The illness can be spread by the infected person from the time symptoms appear until 14 days after all symptoms have ceased. During this period, *Cryptosporidium* is still excreted in the faeces.

How is it spread?

Cryptosporidium is spread via the faecal-oral route. This means you can only become infected after ingesting the parasite. *Cryptosporidium* can be found in soil, food, and water, and on surfaces that have been contaminated with the faeces of infected humans or animals (including pets).

Cryptosporidium can be spread by touching your mouth with contaminated hands. Hands can become contaminated through a variety of activities, such as:

- > changing nappies.
- > caring for an infected person.
- > touching surfaces that have been contaminated by faeces from an infected person (e.g., toys, bathroom and toilet fixtures, and nappy changing tables).

Cryptosporidium can also be contracted by:

- > swallowing recreational water contaminated with *Cryptosporidium*, including that from swimming pools, spas, fountains, lakes, rivers etc.
- > swallowing water or other beverages contaminated with faeces from infected humans or animals.
- > eating uncooked food contaminated with *Cryptosporidium*, such as fruits and vegetables.
- > exposure to human faeces through sexual contact.



What can I do to prevent the spread of *Cryptosporidium* in my home?

Swimming pools and spas

If someone in your household has been diagnosed with cryptosporidiosis, they should not use a swimming pool or spa until two weeks after all symptoms have stopped.

Unlike most other microorganisms, *Cryptosporidium* is not easily destroyed by chlorine at the normal operating concentrations found in swimming pools. If an infected person has used your pool or spa during the infectious period, you should disinfect the pool or spa to prevent the spread of infection to others. If you are not confident that you can successfully disinfect the pool on your own, contact a pool maintenance company.

The following process is recommended to disinfect a pool or spa against *Cryptosporidium* using chlorine:

- > Add sufficient chlorine to the water to achieve 10mg/L free chlorine residual.
- > Ensure 10mg/L free chlorine residual is maintained continuously for at least 25.5 hours (you will need to add more chlorine periodically).
- > Operate the pump and filter at all times during disinfection.
- > Backwash the filter thoroughly after completing the disinfection process.

After disinfection, do not use the swimming pool or spa until the free chlorine level falls to the normal concentration. This may require leaving the pool unused for another day or two.

It may be quicker, easier and more cost effective to drain and thoroughly clean a spa rather than undertake the disinfection process.

Baths

As with swimming pools and spas, *Cryptosporidium* can be spread through sharing bath water. If a child in your household has cryptosporidiosis, they should not share a bath with another child. After the infected child has been bathed, the bath should be emptied and cleaned with household bleach before refilling.

If you wish to use the same bath water for multiple children, the infected child should be bathed last to prevent the spread of infection. Alternatively, a shower may be used rather than a bath as the risk of infection spreading through a shower is minimal.

Hands

If someone in your house has cryptosporidiosis extra care should be taken when washing hands. You should wash your hands with soap and water for at least 15 seconds. Ensure that you rub your hands vigorously and pay attention to the backs of your hands, wrists, between fingers and under fingernails.

This should be done especially:

- > before preparing or eating food.
- > after using the toilet.
- > after changing a nappy or assisting a child to use the toilet.
- > before and after tending to someone who has cryptosporidiosis.
- > after handling an animal or animal waste.
- > after gardening.

Nappies

If a child still in nappies is diagnosed with cryptosporidiosis extra care must be taken to ensure that nappies are disposed of correctly. Ensure that hands are thoroughly washed after nappies are changed and that the change table is cleaned after each use.

Animals

Cryptosporidium can sometimes be spread by animals, including cats, dogs, and farm animals. Animals that do not display symptoms are still capable of spreading *Cryptosporidium*. For this reason, it is important to wash your hands thoroughly after having contact with animals, their faeces, or their living areas.

Further information

[Pools at home and maintaining them.](#)

[Public swimming and spa pools.](#)

[Animal contact – reducing the risk of illness.](#)

[Hand hygiene.](#)

[Handling and preparing food.](#)

For more information

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