



Communicable Diseases GIARDIASIS

Some people know giardiasis as “beaver fever”. Giardiasis is an intestinal disease caused by a parasite.

The parasite is *Giardia lamblia*.

Anyone can get giardiasis. Those at greater risk are:

- People who drink open water from rivers, lakes, or ponds that has not been properly treated.
- Children who attend child care centers.
- People in close contact with children or adults who have giardiasis.

The germ is spread in the stool (or bowel movement).

Giardia is passed in the stool of humans and other wild animals and pets. *Giardia* can be shed in the stool for weeks to months, even if the person has no symptoms.

The germ is spread from person to person by close contact with someone who has the illness.

Outbreaks can occur in child-care centers. Stool from animals can infect lakes, reservoirs, and streams and be passed on when people drink the untreated water.

Symptoms to look for:

- Foul-smelling diarrhea or loose stools.
- Foul-smelling gas.
- Stomach cramps.
- Loss of appetite.
- Weight loss.

It takes 1-4 weeks to get sick after getting infected. Treatment with medicine can shorten the illness.

To prevent the infection:

- Avoid drinking untreated water.
- Keep diapered children out of swimming pools and hot tubs. (Municipal water supplies that are filtered and chlorinated are usually safe.)
- Hand washing is the best way to prevent the spread of this illness. Wash hands after using the bathroom, after handling diapers, and before fixing food or drink.