



HELP YOURSELF AND OTHERS TO STOP INFECTION SPREADING

For further information contact your

Family Doctor

Health Visitor

District Nurse

or

Leeds City Council

Food and Health Service

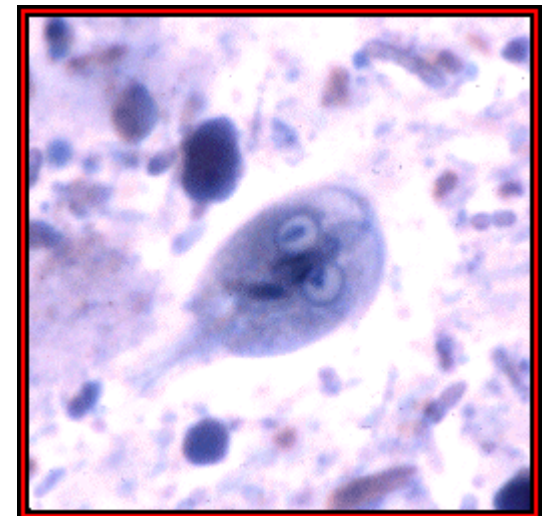
Tel: Leeds 0113 247 6286

ALWAYS REMEMBER TO WASH YOUR HANDS



Leeds Health Protection Team

ADVICE ABOUT
GIARDIASIS



Produced by Leeds Health Protection Team

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GIARDIASIS

What is it?

Giardia cysts cause an infection in the intestine/bowel. Some of the many symptoms which may occur are:

- diarrhoea (frequent, loose, greasy and pale) often with foul smelling wind.
- stomach cramps
- bloating
- general tiredness
- weight loss

Sometimes, none of these symptoms happen at all.

How do you get it?

The small germ-like Giardia cysts get into the body through the mouth, often from inadequately treated water, which in turn can contaminate fruit and vegetables. Giardia is more common in tropical countries and the illness may therefore happen after a holiday in a warm climate.

The illness will usually start 5-25 days after the Giardia cysts have been swallowed.

How does it spread?

Giardia is spread from another person by hand to mouth transfer of the cysts. A person's fingers carry the cysts to the mouth after contact with contaminated water or another infected person. This happens when personal hygiene is poor and hand-washing is not carried out. Giardiasis may spread from an infected person even when they have no diarrhoea or any other symptoms, as the cysts can still be in the stools/faeces.

Giardiasis is infectious for as long as the cysts can be found in the stools.

Is there any treatment?

An antibiotic will usually be prescribed by your doctor. The doctor may also give treatment to young children or the elderly who become dehydrated quickly.

What about work or school?

It is better to stay off while you are ill and/or have symptoms. Make sure you are well for 2-3 days before returning to work, or school. Advice about this will be given by your doctor or the environmental health department. There may be special circumstances that mean you cannot return too soon, if you are a food handler or a healthcare worker.

Children under 5 years of age should not attend school/nursery or childminders for at least 48 hours after symptoms have stopped. The final decision regarding your child's return is with the manager of the premises your child attends.

How can it be prevented?

- Wash and dry hands carefully after visiting the toilet, before eating and after changing baby's nappies.
- Be careful when travelling abroad to countries where sanitation is poor and the drinking water is not pure.
- Fruit and vegetables should always be thoroughly washed.
- Early treatment will help to prevent long term complications.

