

This leaflet gives general advice. For further information please ask either the nursing or medical staff who are providing your care and treatment or contact the Infection Prevention and Control Team on 01386 502552.

If you would like this leaflet in a different language, larger print size, in audio, Braille or any other format please contact the

PALS team by phone on

☎ 01905 760020;

by letter ✉ Communications,
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Worcestershire
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CRYPTOSPORIDIUM

What is it?

Your questions answered

**An Information Leaflet
for
Patients and Staff**

WHAT IS IT?

Cryptosporidium is a very small parasite (bug) which if swallowed causes diarrhoea. It can cause diarrhoea in animals as well as humans and is often found in cattle, sheep, dogs, cats and birds.

WHERE DOES THE INFECTION COME FROM?

- Farm Animals - Infection is found in farm animals especially calves or lambs, and it is more common during the lambing season in the Spring.
- Person to Person Spread - This usually happens within families, nurseries or prisons where there has been a breakdown in personal hygiene.
- Water - Cryptosporidium can be found in untreated water supplies such as rivers and lakes. However, drinking water is very rarely a source of infection.



WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

In Great Britain infection is most common in children aged 1 to 5 years, with young adults the next most commonly affected group. 80 – 90% of people affected experience frequent, watery, offensive diarrhoea with abdominal cramps and vomiting. 50% may suffer headache, tiredness and fever. In normal healthy individuals the symptoms usually last for 1 – 3 weeks and then resolve slowly.

WHAT IS THE INCUBATION PERIOD?

The time taken from swallowing the bug until symptoms develop ranges from 2 – 14 days (usually 7 days).

IS THERE ANY TREATMENT?

There is no specific treatment – except to drink plenty of water to prevent dehydration and rest. In some cases medication may be required.

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU HAVE IT?

Diagnosis is made by the detection of the bug (cysts) in stool specimens submitted to the laboratory.

HOW DO YOU PREVENT THE SPREAD OF IT?

As with all gastro-intestinal infection, risks of spread are greatest whilst the person still has symptoms of diarrhoea and vomiting. As a general rule, people may return to work 48 hours after their symptoms have stopped. The local Council's Environmental Health Officers may contact you to offer further advice on personal hygiene.

To prevent person to person spread of the infection good personal hygiene is essential.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Wash hands regularly and thoroughly, particularly after using the toilet, before preparing or eating food and after changing a baby's nappy.