

FACT SHEET

GIARDIA

(Giardia lamblia enteritis)

<i>What is Giardia?</i>	Giardia is a parasite that infects the upper part of the small intestines. While often asymptomatic, it may be associated with a variety of intestinal symptoms.
<i>How is it spread?</i>	People become infected either by hand-to-mouth transfer of the parasite from the feces of an infected person or indirectly by swallowing fecal contaminated water or food.
<i>What is the incubation period?</i>	It takes from 3-25 days after contact for symptoms to appear.
<i>What are the early signs?</i>	The signs of Giardia may be intermittent and include frequent loose greasy looking diarrhea, gas abdominal cramping and bloating, fatigue and loss of appetite.
<i>What about contact?</i>	Encourage good handwashing. Children do not need to be kept home unless they develop symptoms. If symptoms occur, the child should see a physician for definitive diagnosis and treatment.
<i>How long is the person contagious?</i>	Giardia is contagious for as long as the infected cysts are excreted, or until the infection is treated by a physician.
<i>When is it OK to return to school?</i>	With permission from the doctor, children may return after treatment and the symptoms are gone. Three negative stool samples are required for daycare and preschool.
<i>Other important information</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good handwashing decreases the spread of disease. Children should be taught careful handwashing and other hygiene measures. • All children as well as adults should wash their hands frequently, especially after using the bathroom and before eating. • The school is REQUIRED to report cases of suspected Giardia to the local health department.

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This fact sheet is not intended to replace the advice of your physician. Parents should contact their healthcare provider if they have concerns regarding their child's health. If you have general questions, you may contact a Kalamazoo County nurse at 373-5264 or 373-5267.