

9 Where can I get further information?

For more information on Giardiasis or any other infectious diseases, please consult your health care professional.

You can also contact an Environmental Health Officer at the Council on 6429 8900 or e-mail admin@centralcoast.tas.gov.au

Giardiasis

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1 What is Giardiasis?

Giardia is a protozoan infection associated with the upper small intestine. This illness occurs worldwide and is considered endemic (common) in most regions.

2 Who does it commonly affect?

Everyone is susceptible to this infection, although it is detected more frequently in children than adults. Travellers are considered a high risk group if they travel to countries where the illness is endemic. This illness is readily transmitted through institutions and child care centres, especially where children are not toilet trained.

3 How do I get Giardiasis?

Giardiasis can be transmitted via person-to-person, which involves an infected person passing on the illness to an uninfected person. This can occur if people with this illness do not adequately wash their hands after using the toilet. This can also be transmitted via animal-to-person. Water-borne outbreaks may occur if the water source is contaminated with faecal matter. This can occur in public water supplies or recreational swimming areas.

4 What is the incubation period?

The incubation period for Giardiasis infection is usually one to three weeks, but it can be longer. Because

Giardiasis has a long incubation period, it may be difficult to identify the source.

5 What are the common symptoms?

This illness usually does not produce any symptoms, but when symptoms do occur they can include diarrhoea, abdominal cramps, bloating, nausea, vomiting, fever, fatigue and weight loss. These symptoms can last between one to two weeks, or months in some cases.

6 What treatment is available?

Treatment of this illness depends on the symptoms. More information on treatment options can be obtained from your Medical Practitioner.

7 How can I prevent infection?

The following measures can be taken to prevent the occurrence of this illness:

- ✓ Educating personnel of day care centres in personal hygiene such as the need for hand washing before meals, after toilet use and after changing nappies;
- ✓ Protecting public water supplies from faecal contamination;
- ✓ Educating travellers about the need for safe water and food;
- ✓ Minimising contact with infected people.

7 What is the role of the Environmental Health Officer

If you are experiencing gastroenteritis symptoms you are encouraged to seek medical advice. Your medical practitioner may take a faecal sample, which is to be sent away for testing in a laboratory to determine the pathogen that is causing your illness.

The State's Department of Health and Human Services will contact your local council to inform them of the result. An Environmental Health Officer will contact you to conduct a routine confidential interview in an attempt to identify a possible cause of your illness. This interview will also determine if there is a possible link between other cases.