

Giardiasis

CAUSE: Giardiasis (GEE are DYE us sis) is an intestinal illness caused by the tiny unicellular protozoan parasite *Giardia lamblia*. This parasite has been isolated from domestic and wild animals as well as humans.

EFFECT: The protozoan inhabits and multiplies in the small intestine. Chronic diarrhea containing mucus is a classic sign of infection, but low levels of infection may produce no signs.

How is Giardiasis spread? The parasite is shed in feces. Consumption of contaminated water or feed sources can infect others. Many animals including dogs, cats, beavers, and bears can carry the parasite without appearing ill.

How can Giardiasis be prevented? Prevent contamination of water sources, waterers, and feed by manure of domestic and wild animals. Place wells an adequate distance from septic systems. Like Crypto, Giardia cysts are hardy in the environment, but bleach solutions, quaternary ammonium compounds, steam or boiling water will inactivate them.

Can Giardiasis affect people? Yes, in humans, the symptoms start one to two weeks after being exposed to the parasite and can last up to six weeks. Common symptoms are stomach aches and diarrhea.

What if there is an outbreak? Determine the source of the parasite if possible. Consult your veterinarian or physician for appropriate treatment recommendations.

For more information on Giardiasis, see:

[FDA: Bad Bug Book – Giardia lamblia](#)

[CDC Fact Sheet: Giardiasis](#)

[The Merck Veterinary Manual: Giardiasis](#)

[Giardia: A Common Waterborne Disease](#)