

## Patient instructions: *Cryptosporidium* - information for patients

You have been diagnosed with cryptosporidiosis caused by the *Cryptosporidium* parasite. There are numerous *Cryptosporidium* species and they occur around the world. There have been several small or smallish outbreaks in Finland this decade.

### How is *Cryptosporidium* transmitted?

A person may become infected through drinking water, swimming water or food contaminated with human or animal feces. In addition, people get infected after contact with an infected person or animal. *Cryptosporidium* is highly contagious and a small amount of the infectious form of the parasite, i.e. oocysts is sufficient to cause an infection.

### What are the symptoms of cryptosporidiosis?

Symptoms usually begin within 7 days of infection (can vary between 1 and 22 days). The most common symptom is a watery diarrhea which can vary in severity and duration.

Other symptoms may include:

- abdominal pain
- mild fever
- nausea
- vomiting
- loss of appetite.

Symptoms most commonly last an average of 12 days, but they can continue for up to four weeks. Symptoms may be more severe and last for a long time in people with reduced immunity. The disease may also be asymptomatic.

### How can you prevent the transmission of the disease?

- Drink only purified water (boiling water for 5 minutes destroys oocytes).
- Wash raw vegetables well before eating.
- Avoid unpasteurised milk and dairy products.
- Maintain good hand hygiene: wash your hands before cooking, before eating, after toilet visits, and after touching pets and farm animals.
- Avoid swimming in pools for two weeks after the symptoms have stopped.
- Use protective equipment as needed and maintain good hand hygiene when dealing with farm animals.

The wellbeing services county will provide more detailed instructions on the effect of the disease for those in at-risk professions or children in day care.

### How is cryptosporidiosis treated?

Symptoms of cryptosporidiosis will usually pass on their own, and no medication is needed. Pharmacotherapy can sometimes be used for those with severe symptoms and impaired immunity. If violent diarrhea that is watery leads to dehydration, the patient can receive fluid treatment in the hospital.

**More information:** [THL](#) website.