



Guidance for Mitigation of Cryptosporidiosis in Community Congregate Setting

Background:

Cryptosporidiosis is a disease that causes watery diarrhea. It is caused by a microscopic germ-parasite called cryptosporidium or crypto for short. Crypto lives in the gut of infected humans or animals. An infected person or animal sheds Crypto parasites in their stool. It can be found in water, food, soil or on surfaces or on dirty hands that have been contaminated with stool of humans or animals infected with the parasite. Crypto can be spread by swallowing infected recreational water (swimming pool water, fountain water etc.); drinking untreated water; drinking beverages or ice; and eating undercooked food or drinking unpasteurized/raw milk or apple cider that has been contaminated by crypto. It is also spread by touching your mouth with infected hands or exposure to stool from an infected person through oral-anal sexual contact. Crypto is **not** spread through contact with blood. There are several prevention measures that can be put in place to prevent the spread of crypto in community congregate settings, including following [contact](#) and [standard](#) precautions.

Symptoms Associated with Cryptosporidiosis:

- Watery diarrhea
- Dehydration
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Fever
- Weight loss

It is important to note that some people with Crypto will have no symptoms at all.

How long does it take from exposure to onset of symptoms?

Symptoms of cryptosporidiosis generally begin 2 to 10 days (average 7 days) after becoming infected with the parasite. Symptoms usually last about 1 to 2 weeks (with a range of a few days to 4 or more weeks) in persons with healthy immune systems. Occasionally, people may experience a recurrence of symptoms after a brief period of recovery before the illness ends. Symptoms can come and go for up to 30 days.

Risk Factors Associated with Contracting Cryptosporidiosis:

People with greater exposure to contaminated materials are more at risk for infection, such as:

- Children who attend childcare centers, including diaper-aged children
- Childcare workers
- Parents of infected children
- Older adults (ages 75 years and older)
- People who take care of other people with cryptosporidiosis
- International travelers
- Backpackers, hikers, and campers who drink unfiltered, untreated water
- People who drink from untreated shallow, unprotected well

- People, including swimmers, who swallow water from contaminated sources
- People who handle infected cattle
- People exposed to human feces through sexual contact

Once infected, people with decreased immunity, young children, pregnant women are most at risk for severe disease.

Immediate Next Steps for Case Treatment and Monitoring:

Upon the identification of a resident or staff with symptoms consistent with cryptosporidiosis:

1. Ask the staff member to return home. All staff should be excluded from work until 24 hours after diarrhea has stopped. If the staff member works in dietary and handles food, they should receive a note from their provider to return to work.
2. If a resident is displaying symptoms, they should be isolated away from others and if possible, have their own bathroom. If having a separate bathroom for infected residents is not possible, a separate stall may be an alternative that can reduce contact with the infected individuals' feces. If a separate isolation space is not available, the facility should prioritize cohorting sick residents together with others who have like-symptoms and physically separate them from those who remain asymptomatic, to the best of their ability. If having a separate bathroom for infected residents is not possible, ensure proper cleaning and disinfection is occurring after each use by the case. Learn more on the difference between cleaning and disinfecting here: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/selected-epa-registered-disinfectants>.
3. Following a diagnosis, residents should be placed under [contact precautions](#) (all staff should wear gloves when handling or cleaning any bodily fluids) and avoid contact with other residents for the duration of their illness.
4. Monitor residents for signs of dehydration which include decreased urination, dry mouth and throat, and dizziness when standing up. If this occurs, contact their healthcare provider for possible transfer to the hospital.
5. There is a treatment available for diarrhea caused by cryptosporidiosis in those with healthy immune systems called Nitazoxanide. Staff and residents diagnosed with cryptosporidiosis should follow-up with their healthcare provider to determine if treatment is right for them.
4. Contact the Special Populations team at the Chicago Department of Public Health to report any cases of cryptosporidiosis here: <https://redcap.link/specpopreport>

Preventing Cryptosporidiosis:

Crypto can be spread by swallowing infected recreational water (swimming pool water, fountain water etc.); drinking untreated water; drinking beverages or ice; and eating undercooked food or drinking unpasteurized/raw milk or apple cider that has been contaminated by crypto. It is also spread by touching your mouth with infected hands or exposure to stool from an infected person through oral-anal sexual contact.

Practice Good Hygiene Everywhere

- Promote frequent washing your hands with soap and water for all staff and residents (Alcohol based hand sanitizer is not effective against crypto.)

Promote Infection Prevention in Youth Congregate Settings

- Exclude children who are sick with diarrhea from childcare settings until the diarrhea has stopped.

- Clean, sanitize, or disinfect toys and surfaces to prevent germs from spreading easily.
- Wash hands regularly with soap and water to keep kids and caregivers healthy.
- Ask adults with diarrhea to return home until 24-hours of symptom resolution.

Avoid Water That Might Be Contaminated

- Do not drink untreated water or use untreated ice from lakes, rivers, springs, ponds, streams, or shallow wells.
- Follow advice given during local drinking water advisories.
- If the safety of the drinking water is in doubt (for example, if water source is unknown), use at least one of the following:
 - Commercially bottled water
 - Water that has been previously boiled for at least 1 minute and left to cool. At elevations above 6,500 feet (1,981 meters), boil for 3 minutes.
 - A filter designed to remove Crypto.
 - The label might read ‘NSF 53’ or ‘NSF 58.’
 - Filter labels that read “absolute pore size of 1 micron or smaller” are also effective.

Avoid Food That Might Be Contaminated

- If you drink [milk](#) or apple cider, only buy if it has been pasteurized.
- Do not eat fruits and vegetables washed in water that might be contaminated.

Organization	Contact Information
CDPH Community Congregate Settings Team	Email: SpecialPops@cityofchicago.org Reporting Link: https://redcap.link/specpopreport