

# Giardia Lamblia Fact Sheet

## What is Giardia Lamblia?

Giardia Lamblia is a protozoan which can cause the disease, Giardiasis. Giardiasis reported in the country, usually results from travel abroad.

If you have Giardia Lamblia you may be experiencing the following symptoms:

- Diarrhoea
- Abdominal cramps
- Tiredness
- Bloating
- Weight loss

However, often there are no symptoms.

## Incubation period

The incubation period is 5 to 25 days or longer, but usually about 7 to 10 days.

## Where Giardia Lamblia is found

Usually man is the source, but animals can also carry the organism. This includes rats, rabbits, dogs, cats, pigs, cows and gerbils. Children are more often infected than adults. It is very common for people to have this infection but not to show any symptoms.

## How it is spread?

Everyone seems to be vulnerable to this infection.

The organism is passed to humans by three main methods :

- Person-to-person transmission occurs by hand to mouth transfer of cysts from the faeces of an infected individual
- Through contact with infected pets (especially puppies or kittens), through infected wild animals
- Through ingestion of faecally contaminated water, such as reservoirs, well water and streams.

## Precautionary measures

- Always wash hands after visiting the toilet
- Dispose of faeces and nappies in a sanitary manner

## Control measures

- Exclude symptomatic individuals from food handling and care of elderly residents.
- Stress proper hand washing.
- Quarantine of individuals is not needed.
- Cleanse the toilets, wash hand basins, door and flush handles thoroughly and frequently with a mild bleach solution. Take care that bleach does not splash into eyes or onto skin. Rinse immediately with plenty of cold water and seek medical advice if this happens. It is advisable to wear eye protection and gloves.