

Cryptosporidiosis

Definition:

Cryptosporidiosis is caused by a parasite called *Cryptosporidium*.

Signs and symptoms:

The main symptom is watery diarrhea and may also include stomach pain, fever, nausea, and vomiting. Symptoms can last for 1 to 2 weeks.

Transmission:

Cryptosporidiosis is primarily transmitted to a person through swallowing the parasite from an item contaminated with feces. Illness may result from consumption of contaminated food, unpasteurized juices or (raw) milk, water that has not been disinfected, or contact with the feces of infected people or animals.

Diagnosis:

Cryptosporidiosis is diagnosed through laboratory testing of a stool sample for the presence of the *Cryptosporidium* parasite.

Role of the School Nurse:

Prevention

- Provide education to students and staff regarding good hand washing with soap and water
- Promote good hand washing when visiting farms, or having contact with animals
- Avoid swallowing water when swimming or playing in lakes, ponds, streams, swimming pools and backyard “kiddie” pools
- Exclude symptomatic students and staff from school and school trips, especially swimming, while diarrhea persists and for 2 weeks after symptoms resolve
- Provide education on good food safety practices

Treatment Recommendations

- If symptoms are noted, the child should be referred to their healthcare provider
- Most people get better without any treatment, exceptions are made for the immunocompromised
- Non-specific supportive therapy, including hydration, is important

Exclusions

- Students should be excluded from school while symptomatic with diarrhea
- Educational modifications may be warranted in children with a positive diagnosis
- See Maine Food Code for exclusions for staff handling food

Reporting Requirements

- Cryptosporidiosis is a reportable disease – report to Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821

Resources:

- Maine CDC cryptosporidiosis website (including fact sheet)
<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/disease/cryptosporidiosis.shtml>
- Maine Food Code: <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/environmental-health/el/rules.htm>
- Federal CDC cryptosporidium website <http://www.cdc.gov/crypto>
- USDA food safety website http://www.fsis.usda.gov/food_safety_education/index.asp
- Federal CDC raw milk website <http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/rawmilk/raw-milk-index.html>
- Federal CDC healthy swimming website <http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/>