

GASTROINTESTINAL TRACT INFECTIONS

Cryptosporidiosis

Cryptosporidiosis is a parasitic gastrointestinal infection. Transmission occurs via faecal-oral spread from an infected person or animal or from a faecally contaminated environment, such as a food or water source.

Cryptosporidiosis outbreaks have been associated with drinking water supplies, animal contact, travel, swimming pools, and recreational water facilities.

Approximately 40% of laboratory confirmed cases occur in children below 5 years of age.

The incubation period is usually 7 to 10 days.

The infection may be acute or chronic. It can cause asymptomatic infection, mild diarrhoea or profuse watery diarrhoea associated with abdominal cramps or pain, nausea, vomiting, fever, and loss of appetite.

In immunologically healthy individuals, symptoms can last for up to 2 to 3 weeks.

Recurrence has been reported in one-third of cases.

In immunocompromised individuals (particularly people with profound T cell immunodeficiencies), infection can be a chronic debilitating illness with persistent diarrhoea.

Diagnosis is only made after a positive stool sample result.

If clinical suspicion remains high after negative stool sample, send further samples for ova, cysts, and parasites 2–3 days apart.

Treatment:

No specific licensed treatment currently available.

Follow self-care and fluid intake advice ([CKS Gastroenteritis](#)).

Avoid anti-motility agents acutely and particularly with bloody diarrhoea.

Consider screening for HIV.

Seek specialist advice if the person is severely immunocompromised, owing to the risk of serious and life-threatening complications. Occasionally refractory, chronic diarrhoea secondary to Cryptosporidiosis is the initial presenting complaint of an underlying immunodeficiency.

This is a **notifiable disease** and must be reported, as clusters of cases warrant further investigation to exclude a common source ([Report a notifiable disease - GOV.UK](#)).

Advice on how to avoid getting and passing on the infection ([Cryptosporidium: public advice - GOV.UK](#)).

If cryptosporidiosis is suspected or confirmed, the person should not go swimming for 2 weeks after the last episode of diarrhoea.