



## **Cryptosporidiosis Fact Sheet**

### **What is cryptosporidiosis?**

Cryptosporidiosis is an illness caused by the protozoan *Cryptosporidium*, a single-celled parasite.

### **What are the signs and symptoms of cryptosporidiosis?**

The most common symptom is diarrhea which is usually watery and profuse, and often accompanied by abdominal cramping. Nausea, vomiting, fever, headache and loss of appetite may also occur. Some persons infected with *Cryptosporidium* may not become ill.

### **Who is susceptible to cryptosporidiosis and how long does the illness last?**

All persons are presumed susceptible to infection with *Cryptosporidium*. In most healthy persons with normal immune systems, signs and symptoms generally persist for two weeks or less, although they may improve and then worsen during that time period. However, immune compromised persons may be unable to clear the parasite and may have much more severe and long lasting illness.

### **How is the disease contracted?**

*Cryptosporidium* is shed in the feces of infected humans, domestic animals, and wild animals. It can be spread person-to-person or animal-to-person and by drinking contaminated water. Infected individuals can shed the organism in stool for several weeks after they recover from the illness. Because cryptosporidiosis is transmitted by the fecal-oral route, persons with the greatest potential to transmit the organism include infected persons who have diarrhea, persons who are incontinent of stool, persons with poor personal hygiene, and diapered children.

### **How is cryptosporidiosis diagnosed?**

The infection is diagnosed by identifying the parasite during a microscopic examination of the stool.

### **How is cryptosporidiosis treated?**

There is no specific treatment for cryptosporidiosis. Fluid therapy is indicated if dehydration is a problem. Anti-diarrheal drugs reduce the motility of the intestines and may provide some temporary improvement.

### **How can I avoid getting and transmitting cryptosporidiosis?**

Wash hands thoroughly after using the toilet or changing diapers and before handling food. Avoid drinking raw milk and wash hands thoroughly after contact with cattle. Avoid drinking untreated and inadequately filtered surface water.