



Giardiasis Gastro-Enteritis



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What is *Giardiasis*?

Giardiasis is the commonest human gastro-enteritis parasite in the west.

Although many infections may have been acquired through travel abroad, there are also a substantial number of people who have acquired the infection without travel.

Giardiasis is caused by the protozoa *Giardia lamblia*.

What are the sources of infection?

Sources are inadequately treated contaminated water; person-to-person spread by the faecal-oral route; uncooked vegetables washed in contaminated water.

Spread of this infection is common among young children.

What are the symptoms of *Giardiasis*?

The symptoms are profuse watery diarrhoea often accompanied by stomach pain and nausea. The severity of the symptoms varies considerably.

These symptoms usually last for several weeks.

The symptoms start between 1 and 3 weeks after contact with the source.

What to do if someone has *Giardiasis*

During the diarrhoeal phase personal hygiene should be scrupulous and food-handling by the infected person should be avoided as it is during this time that you are most likely to pass the infection onto another person.

You should also inform your doctor, who will in turn inform the Environmental Health Officer.

An Officer from the Environmental Health Services may then visit you to give advice and to determine the possible sources of the infection.

Who is more prone to food poisoning?

The very young and the elderly are generally more vulnerable than healthy adults. However, anyone whose health is in some way impaired or whose immune system is low will also be prone to getting food poisoning.

Further questions?

If you are still worried or need further advice, please do not hesitate to contact the Environmental Health Services at Epsom Town Hall.