

INFORMATION SHEET 1 – CRYPTOSPORIDIUM

WHAT IS IT?

Cryptosporidium is a microscopic single-celled parasite.

WHERE IS IT FOUND?

Cryptosporidium can be found in the gut of humans and particularly in farm and other domesticated animals. It can also be found in water contaminated with faeces.

It survives outside of the body in the form of a spore, which can survive in the environment for long periods of time. Spores are resistant to the chemicals used to purify drinking water.

HOW IS IT SPREAD?

Cryptosporidium is spread from direct contact with infected animals, or with items contaminated with animal faeces. It is also spread from picnicking in fields where animals have been grazing. Person to person spread may occur, particularly in households and nurseries. Outbreaks have been associated with public water supplies and contaminated food.

WHAT DOES IT DO?

Cryptosporidium causes diarrhoea, vomiting and abdominal pain, typically within 2 to 5 days of infection, although this period may be shorter or longer.

HOW IS IT CONTROLLED?

By washing hands thoroughly after using the toilet.

By washing hands thoroughly after handling and feeding animals, including pets.

By not drinking untreated milk or untreated water.

By following guidelines for farm visits.

HOW SHOULD WE WASH HANDS?

Simply rinsing the tips of fingertips under cold water does NOT count. Here are some reminders:

- **Always use warm water. It's better to wet hands before applying soap as this prevents irritation.**
- **Rub hands together vigorously for about 15 seconds, making sure both sides of the hands are washed thoroughly, around the thumbs, between each finger and around and under the nails.**
- **Then, rinse with clean water.**
- **Germs spread more easily if hands are wet so dry them thoroughly. Use a clean dry towel, paper towel or air dryer; it doesn't matter which.**