



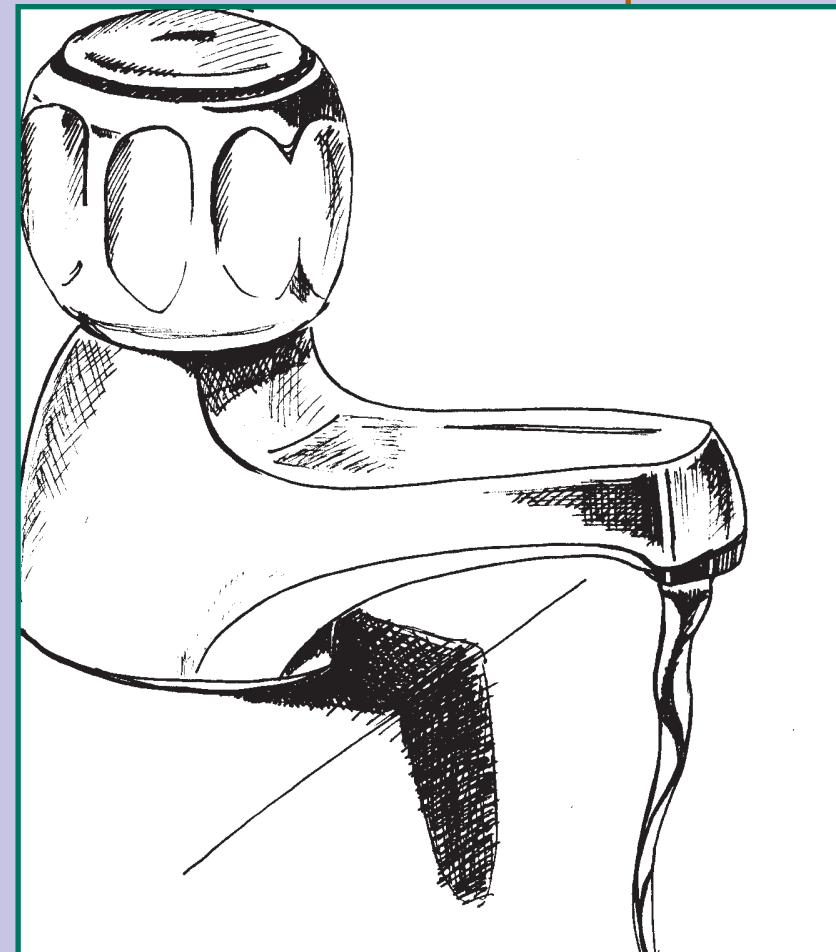
Giardia Lamblia

If you need more advice or would like to discuss prevention of food poisoning, please contact the Environmental Health Food Safety Team.

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What To Do Whilst You Or A Member Of Your Family Has Food Poisoning

Take extra care with your hygiene and, in particular, wash hands thoroughly:

- after using the toilet
- before and after handling food especially foods which are not going to be cooked again, ie cooked ham
- after handling raw meat and raw vegetables, e.g. raw chicken and dirty potatoes
- before eating or feeding others
- after changing dirty nappies and soiled clothing
- after touching pets and other animals

Whilst symptoms persist, it is important to maintain high standards of hygiene and if possible do not prepare food for other people, to reduce the risk of passing on the infection.

Contacting The Environmental Health Food Safety Team

- if you are a food handler, health care worker or work with the elderly or children under 5 years old, do not return to work until you have checked with the Environmental Health Food Safety Team at the Local Authority

Food handlers suffering from food poisoning must also report this matter to their line manager and leave the food handling area

- if you are not included in the above list of people, generally you can return to work when you meet the following requirements:
 - you have not suffered vomiting in the last 48 hours and any treatment for this has ceased
 - you have not suffered from diarrhoea in the last 48 hours and any treatment for this has ceased
 - you observe good hygiene practice, particularly hand washing
 - children should not go to school or nursery until their symptoms have cleared

Following the advice and precautions in this leaflet could help prevent food poisoning being passed on to other people and it could help prevent you and your family suffering from food poisoning in the future.

Giardia lamblia is a parasite which causes diarrhoea. The parasite produces cysts and is one of the commonest gastro-enteritis parasites of man in the Western World.

Symptoms

Symptoms include:

- diarrhoea (occasionally leading to fatty stools)
- nausea
- abdominal pain

Once the person has become infected the main symptoms can appear between 4 to 25 days (usually within 7 to 10 days). The symptoms may be chronic and relapsing and may last for a couple of weeks. The person's stools will be infectious from the onset of symptoms and for several weeks after the symptoms have disappeared. The cyst stage is resistant to the chlorine concentrations used in most water treatment plants.

Sources of Infection

The commonest sources of infection are:

- contaminated water supplies
- faecal-oral transmission from person-to-person and animal-to person
- contact with infected animals
- contaminated foods which are 'ready to eat', ie salads or cooked meats
- ingestion of the cysts via drinking water or infected individuals

Person-to-person transmission of the infection is extremely uncommon and the risk is therefore very low. It can nonetheless occur particularly between children, during the acute diarrhoea phase and when adults handle soiled clothing of infected individuals.

Prevention

Cooking

- ensure that water supplies are properly treated or wholesome, particularly untreated private water supplies
- when travelling abroad, check that water and ice are safe to consume; if not or in doubt, make sure it is sterilised using chlorine tablets for example, or buy bottled water
- avoid eating salads and raw fruit/vegetables that have been washed with non-sterilised water in countries where the water is not safe to consume

Personal Hygiene

- wash hands thoroughly:
 - after using the toilet
 - before/after handling food especially foods which are not going to be cooked again, e.g. cooked ham
 - after handling raw meat and raw vegetables, e.g. raw chicken and dirty potatoes
 - before eating or feeding others
 - after changing dirty nappies and soiled clothing
 - after touching pets and other animals
- if possible do not prepare food for other people when suffering from food poisoning type symptoms
- take care with outside activities to wash hands before preparing food, especially after camping or water sports

Why Are Environmental Health At The Local Authority Involved?

Doctors and Local Health Authorities have to notify the Local Authority about cases of food poisoning and Environmental Health staff investigate such cases, to prevent the spread of infection and also to help to identify how the infection occurred. We also offer advice and help with any general queries.

Importantly we try to establish the cause of the food poisoning, and we follow this up where necessary by inspecting food premises to help prevent other people suffering.

Additionally, we also provide advice on precautions which should be taken, especially to people in groups where there is a high risk of passing on the infection. This includes food handlers, young children and people who look after the very young, the elderly or the ill.

With some types of food poisoning, you may become a carrier or a symptomless carrier. If you are in the high risk groups mentioned above, you must not return to work unless you meet the following requirements:

- you have not suffered vomiting in the last 48 hours and any treatment for this has ceased
- you have not suffered from diarrhoea in the last 48 hours and any treatment for this has ceased
- you observe good hygiene practice, particularly hand washing