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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CRYPTO IN HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY



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Tampa, Fla. – Although there is no *Cryptosporidium* outbreak in Hillsborough County, the health department is monitoring and responding to suspected cases. *Cryptosporidium* is a microscopic parasite that causes the diarrheal disease cryptosporidiosis. Both the parasite and the disease are commonly known as “Crypto.” The latest confirmed cases are listed in [Florida Charts](#).

Most of the confirmed crypto cases in Hillsborough have not been linked to pools. There are many places where an individual may contract the disease. Crypto is spread in places such as daycare settings, pools, or other settings where someone may come in contact with feces from a person or animal with the disease.

Crypto is a reportable disease, so health care providers are required to report cases to the Florida Department of Health. Once notified, a member of the health department’s epidemiological team will contact the health care provider to confirm the case details. An interview with the patient is then carried out. The interview is to find out how the person got the disease and identify who the person may have exposed. The patient and/or others exposed are then provided with information on the dos and don’ts.

Crypto can be spread by:

- Swallowing recreational water (for example, the water in swimming pools, fountains, lakes, rivers) contaminated with Crypto
 - Crypto’s high tolerance to chlorine enables the parasite to survive for long periods of time in chlorinated drinking and swimming pool water
- Drinking untreated water from a lake or river that is contaminated with Crypto
- Swallowing water, ice, or beverages contaminated with poop from infected humans or animals
- Eating undercooked food or drinking unpasteurized/raw apple cider or milk that gets contaminated with Crypto
- Touching your mouth with contaminated hands
 - Hands can become contaminated through a variety of activities, such as touching surfaces or objects (e.g., toys, bathroom fixtures, changing

tables, diaper pails) that have been contaminated by poop from an infected person, changing diapers, caring for an infected person, and touching an infected animal

- Exposure to poop from an infected person through oral-anal sexual contact

Crypto is not spread through contact with blood.

Symptoms

Symptoms of Crypto generally begin 2 to 10 days (average 7 days) after becoming infected with the parasite. Symptoms include:

- Watery diarrhea
- Stomach cramps or pain
- Dehydration
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Fever
- Weight loss

Symptoms usually last about 1 to 2 weeks (with a range of a few days to 4 or more weeks) in people with healthy immune systems.

The most common symptom of cryptosporidiosis is watery diarrhea. Some people with Crypto will have no symptoms at all.

Who is most at risk?

People who are most likely to become infected with *Cryptosporidium* include 1,2:

- Children who attend childcare centers, including diaper-aged children
- Childcare workers
- Parents of infected children
- Older adults (ages 75 years and older)
- People who take care of other people with Crypto
- International travelers
- Backpackers, hikers, and campers who drink unfiltered, untreated water
- People who drink from untreated shallow, unprotected wells
- People, including swimmers, who swallow water from contaminated sources
- People who handle infected calves or other ruminants like sheep
- People exposed to human poop through sexual contact

Contaminated water might include water that has not been boiled or filtered, as well as contaminated recreational water sources (e.g., swimming pools, lakes, rivers, ponds, and streams).

Although Crypto can infect all people, some groups are likely to develop more serious illness.

- **Young children and pregnant women** may be more likely to get dehydrated because of their diarrhea so they should drink plenty of fluids while ill.
- People with **severely weakened immune systems** are at risk for more serious disease. Symptoms may be more severe and could lead to serious or life-threatening illness. Examples of people with weakened immune systems include those with HIV/AIDS; those with inherited diseases that affect the immune system; and cancer and transplant patients who are taking certain immunosuppressive drugs.

More information on the disease can be [found here](#).

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