

## FACT SHEET

For Schools

# CRYPTOSPORIDIOSIS (Crypto)

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**Purpose:** Information for *school settings* when Crypto is present in their facility.

### What is Crypto?

Crypto, or Cryptosporidiosis, is an illness that is caused by a parasite. It affects both animals and humans. People can get Crypto by coming in contact with other people or animals that have the parasite, swimming or playing in water with the parasite in it, or by drinking contaminated water.

### Who can get Crypto?

Anyone. Employees who work with children in diapers are at increased risk for getting Crypto.

### How is Crypto spread?

Crypto is found in the feces (stool) of an infected person or animal. It is spread:

- By putting something in your mouth or accidentally swallowing something that has come in contact with the stool of a person or animal infected with Crypto. This could be items such as toys, hands, eating utensils, etc. Items can be contaminated by a person who has not properly washed their hands after a diaper change or toileting.
- By accidentally swallowing Crypto picked up from surfaces (such as toys, bathroom fixtures, changing tables, diaper pails) contaminated with stool from an infected person.
- By swallowing recreational water contaminated with Crypto. Recreational water is water in swimming or wading pools, hot tubs, lakes, rivers, ponds, or streams that can be contaminated with sewage or feces from humans or animals. Note: Crypto is chlorine resistant and can live for days in pools.
- By eating uncooked food contaminated with Crypto. Thoroughly wash with uncontaminated water all vegetables and fruits you plan to eat or serve raw.

### What are the symptoms of crypto?

The most common symptom of crypto is frequent and watery diarrhea. Other symptoms may include headache, nausea, vomiting and low-grade fever. Symptoms may briefly improve and then get worse again, but people who are healthy usually get well in 14-30 days. However, some people may not show symptoms of illness, but can still spread the disease to others.

### How can schools prevent the spread of crypto?

- Frequent hand washing by both staff and students. Wash hands with hot, soapy water before handling foods and eating, and after using the toilet, diapering young children, and handling animals
- Exclude students and staff with diarrhea from school
- Disinfect surfaces and toys that may be contaminated with Crypto\*
- Educate parents and staff about the illness and outbreak
- Employees and students with diarrhea should not prepare food for anyone
- Suspend the use of child wading pools, water tables, and other water based activities.
- If the school has a pool, contact your local environmental public health agency for more information on how to prevent the spread of Crypto through water exposure.
- Infected persons should not swim or be involved in any water activities – swimming, wading, etc. while ill and for at least **2 weeks** after diarrhea resolves.
- Separate diapering and food-handling areas and staff responsibilities
- Use disposable gloves with every diaper change
- Use disposable paper to cover diaper-changing area; change the paper with every diaper change
- Separate diaper-changing areas from children's play areas

**\*Disinfection of surfaces and objects**

Disinfect bathrooms and food preparation surfaces daily. Use a 3% hydrogen peroxide solution, or if available, 6% concentration of hydrogen peroxide, and let it sit on the surface for 20 minutes\*\*. No disinfectant is guaranteed to be completely effective; however the 3% hydrogen peroxide is usually effective. Toys and tabletops also should be cleaned and disinfected with the 3% hydrogen peroxide solution for 20 minutes at least twice daily. Cloth toys may be washed and heat-dried in the clothes dryer for 30 minutes.

*\*\* This solution is for schools that have staff or children with Crypto- usually two or more cases. This is not for general disinfection in schools without illness.*

**Should hydrogen peroxide be used in addition to bleach?**

If there is a confirmed case of crypto in the school, instead of a bleach solution, use a 3% (99% kill rate) or, if available, 6% (99.9% kill rate) concentration of hydrogen peroxide for cleaning. If for some reason schools are using both bleach and hydrogen peroxide, the surface to which the hydrogen peroxide was applied should be wiped and be completely dry before using bleach. Bleach, not hydrogen peroxide, should be used for general disinfection in schools without Crypto illness.

**When is it safe for schools to switch back to normal non-hydrogen peroxide cleaning?**

It is likely safe to switch back to normal routine cleaners and disinfectants one incubation period (12 days) after resolution of diarrhea and vomiting in child care cases. However, if there is a community-wide outbreak of Crypto, it might be reasonable to continue to use hydrogen peroxide longer than the 12 days.

**Where do we find 6% hydrogen peroxide?**

Any janitorial or cleaning supply warehouse that supplies hospitals will usually carry 6% hydrogen peroxide. The 6% concentration may also be labeled "20 volume." A 3% hydrogen peroxide solution may be referred to as a "10 volume" solution.

**Are students and/or staff required to have two negative stools before returning to school?**

IDPH does not require students or staff confirmed with Crypto to provide two negative stools before returning to school. Both students and staff should remain out of schools until diarrhea and vomiting has stopped.