

## **Cryptosporidium (“Crypto”) Fact Sheet – Midwest Outbreak**

### **What is Crypto?**

Crypto is a tiny parasite (a living germ) that can infect your stomach and intestines. It causes a sickness called cryptosporidiosis, which mainly leads to diarrhea.

### **How does it spread?**

Crypto spreads when germs from stool (poop) get into the mouth. This can happen by:

- Drinking or swallowing contaminated water (like pools, lakes, or tap water)
- Eating contaminated food
- Touching infected people, animals, or surfaces and then touching your mouth  
Crypto can survive in swimming pools even when chlorine is used.

### **Common symptoms**

Symptoms usually start about 2–10 days after exposure and may include:

- Watery diarrhea (most common)
- Stomach cramps
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fever
- Weight loss and dehydration  
Most healthy people get better in 1–2 weeks.

### **How is it treated?**

- Drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration (most important)
- Rest
- Some patients may receive a medication called nitazoxanide or bactrim (Sulfa Antibiotic)
- Anti-diarrhea medicines may help symptoms  
Many people recover without specific treatment.

### **Special concerns for immunocompromised patients (like transplant patients)**

- Illness can be much more severe and last longer
- Diarrhea can become chronic (long-lasting) and lead to weight loss and poor nutrition
- Infection may spread beyond the intestines (such as to the liver or lungs)
- Medications may not work as well
- Adjusting immunosuppressive therapy and close monitoring may be needed

**Prevention tips**

- Wash hands often with soap and water
- Do not swallow pool or lake water
- Avoid swimming when you have diarrhea
- Wash fruits and vegetables