

FACT SHEET

Giardia

Common clinical features

Variety of intestinal symptoms including chronic diarrhoea, abdominal cramps, flatulence, leading to weight loss and fatigue. Duration can extend to months or years if undiagnosed. Often asymptomatic.

Incubation period

5 – 25 days

Where is it found?

Gastrointestinal tracts of people and animals.

How is it acquired by affected individuals?

Either by person to person spread or from faecally contaminated food or water. Food borne transmission is rare. Spread within families and nurseries is well documented. Cysts are resistant to chlorine levels in drinking water, so deficiencies in filtration or sewage contamination can result in outbreaks.

How does the laboratory confirm the diagnosis?

Faeces samples are examined by microscopy for cysts or tested with an immunoassay test. Results are usually available within 2 days of receipt in the laboratory.

How is it treated?

One of the few gastrointestinal infections for which there is a specific antibiotic treatment, Metronidazole.