Giardia (G. Duodenalis, Intestinalis)

Giardia is an infection of the small bowel. It affects the intestinal tract and cannot be seen with the naked eye.

CAUSES

It is caused by an amoebae (*parasite*). It is often found in unclean (*contaminated*) water. But it can also be found in some tap water.

SYMPTOMS

An infection causes:

- Explosive, foul smelling, watery diarrhea.
- Feeling sick to your stomach (*nausea*).
- Belly (*abdominal*) cramps and pain.

It takes about one to two weeks after ingesting infected water or food to get sick. The illness usually lasts about 2 to 4 weeks. Infection in infants and children can be long lasting.

DIAGNOSIS

It can be diagnosed by stool exam. Blood tests may be needed.

TREATMENT

Medications can be given to shorten the course of the illness.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- In areas of contamination, boil your water if possible. Giardia can also be found in some tap water. Filtering removes most Giardia. Cysts of Giardia are resistant to chlorine.
- Be careful handling soiled undergarments and diapers. If infection is present, it is easily passed by hand to mouth. Use good hand washing techniques.

RETURN as directed for follow-up. The family may need treatment if other members get sick.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You do not get better.

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