

Giardiasis



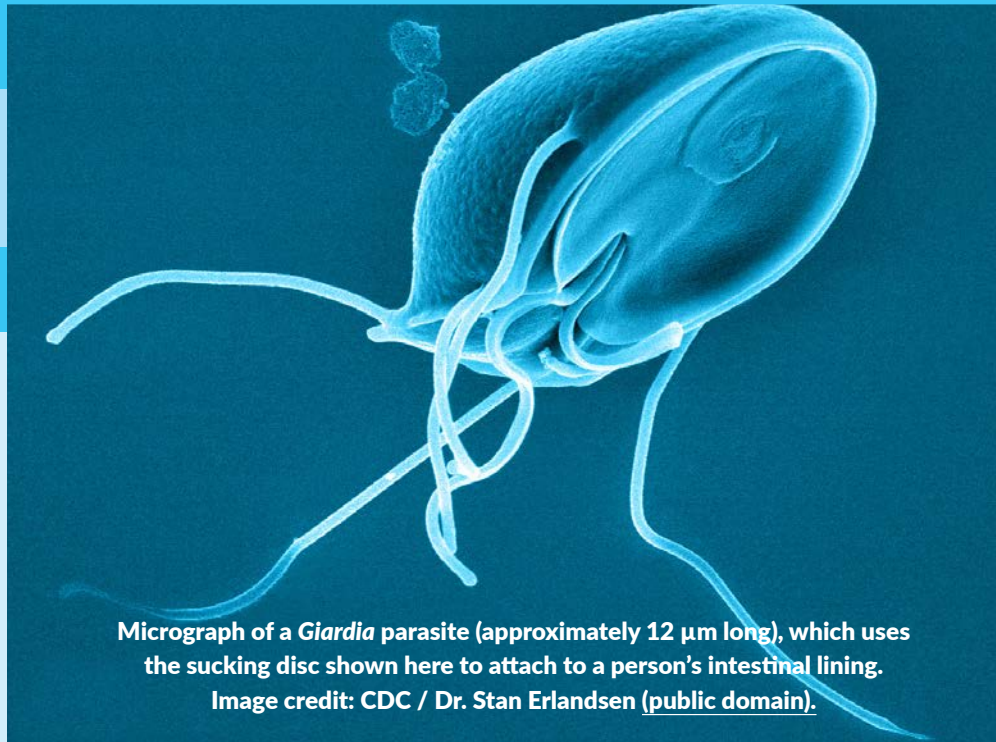
Distribution

Found worldwide, giardiasis is one of the most commonly-reported parasitic diseases.



Cause

Consuming food or water contaminated with cysts of *Giardia lamblia* (protozoa), which come from the feces of infected animals and humans. The cysts can survive in the environment and remain infectious for weeks or months. After people consume them, the cysts mature into *Giardia* parasites and attach to people's intestinal walls.



Micrograph of a *Giardia* parasite (approximately 12 μm long), which uses the sucking disc shown here to attach to a person's intestinal lining.
Image credit: CDC / Dr. Stan Erlandsen (public domain).



Symptoms

Symptoms vary, often lasting for two to six weeks. Symptoms may include diarrhea, stomach cramps, greasy feces that float, nausea, vomiting, and dehydration.

Some people who are infected have no symptoms, but their feces can still make other people sick.

Infants and pregnant women are more likely to become dehydrated.



Prevention

- Treat and safely store all drinking water.
- Wash fruits and vegetables in safe drinking water; cook food thoroughly.
- Use improved latrines to keep feces from the environment.
- Use good hygiene, including handwashing with soap at all critical times.

HOUSEHOLD WATER TREATMENT OPTIONS

- Filters that are rated "very effective" for protozoa.
- Boiling and SODIS inactivate *Giardia* cysts.
- Note: *Giardia* cysts are resistant to chlorine.



Treatment

A variety of prescription drugs can be used to treat giardiasis. Oral rehydration solution may be needed if people become dehydrated from prolonged diarrhea.