Note:

This statewide guideline has been prepared to promote and facilitate standardisation and consistency of practice, using a multidisciplinary approach.

Information in this statewide guideline is current at the time of publication.

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The clinical material offered in this statewide standard/policy provides a minimum standard, but does not replace or remove clinical judgement or the professional care and duty necessary for each specific patient case. Where care deviates from that indicated in the statewide guideline contemporaneous documentation with explanation must be provided.

This statewide guideline does not address all the elements of clinical practice and assumes that the individual clinicians are responsible for:

- Discussing care with consumers in an environment that is culturally appropriate and which enables respectful confidential discussion. This includes the use of interpreter services where necessary,
- Advising consumers of their choice and ensuring informed consent is obtained,
- Providing care within scope of practice, meeting all legislative requirements and maintaining standards of professional conduct, and
- Documenting all care in accordance with mandatory and local requirements
Introduction
> Cryptosporidiosis (commonly called ‘crypto’) is a diarrhoeal disease caused by the microscopic parasite *Cryptosporidium parvum*
> *Cryptosporidium* has a worldwide distribution
> The parasite is protected by an outer shell that allows it to survive outside the body for long periods of time (it is very resistant to chlorine disinfection)

Clinical symptoms
> May be asymptomatic
> *Cryptosporidium parvum* gastroenteritis (in immunocompetent patients is usually self-limiting within 14 days and requires no treatment) involves the following symptoms:
  > Watery diarrhoea
  > Abdominal cramps
  > Slight fever
  > Dehydration
> In immunocompromised patients watery diarrhoea may be severe and prolonged

Incubation period
> 1 – 12 days

Route of transmission
> *Cryptosporidium parvum* can live in the intestine of animals or humans and is passed in the stool of an infected person or animal
> Direct contact (ingestion) with food, water or soil contaminated with cryptosporidium parasites e.g. swallowing recreational water in swimming pools, fountains, lakes, rivers or streams
> Swimming in contaminated water
> Direct contact with surfaces contaminated with faeces of infected humans or animals

Infection precautions
> Standard precautions

Diagnosis
> Stool specimen for microscopy and sensitivity
Treatment

- There is no consistently effective treatment
- Encourage fluids to avoid dehydration
- Anti-diarrhoeal medication should be avoided in pregnancy. However, codeine and dihydrocodeine are ADEC Category A medications and are therefore regarded as safe.
- Nitazoxamide 500mg orally, every 12 hours for 3 days. ADEC Category B medication. (This drug is not registered in Australia; available via Special Access Scheme: Tel: 02-6232 8111)

References


Version control and change history

PDS reference: OCE use only

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