ATTACK OF THE GIARDIASIS DISEASE!!!  
Raise your defenses, protect yourself!

What Should You Know?

* Giardiasis is a **pandemic**, diarrheal disease, meaning that it can be found within every region of the world. It is caused by a parasite called *Giardia*, making it an **infectious** disease.
* Giardia is found on surfaces or in food, soil, or water that has been contaminated with feces (poop) from other infected people/animals. People only become infected after swallowing the parasite; giardia cannot infect through the contact of blood.
* Giardia is protected by an outer shell (**cyst**) that allows it to survive outside the body for long periods of time.

HOW IS Giardia Spread?

* It is considered to be a **communicable** illness because it is contagious, and may be passed person-to-person (or even animal-to-person).
* Giardiasis spreads through contact from person to person so it’s classified as a **propagated** outbreak.
* The giardia parasite is spread through both **horizontal direct contact transmission** and **indirect contact via contaminated water** (by fomites). Direct contact transmission occurs when an uninfected person comes into contact with the feces from infected humans. Indirect contact transmission occurs when an uninfected person comes into contact with a fomite that has been contaminated.
* Horizontal direct contact transmission occurs through the fecal-oral route, meaning that people become infected when they swallow the Giardia parasite picked up from contaminated surfaces, such as bathroom handles, changing tables, and diaper pails (Portal of entry is the mouth and exit is the anus).  
   Feces 🡪contaminated surface 🡪 hand🡪 mouth 🡪exits through anus.
* Indirect contact via contaminated water occurs when giardia parasites get into drinking water, either from animal stools, or from food preparers who have not washed their hands properly (Portal of entry is the

mouth and Portal of Exit is the anus).

* Giardiasis is a **primary infection**, which means that it’s a disease a healthy person gets.
* Oral-anal contact during sex has also been known to cause infection.

**The signs & symptoms**

* Some people may be infected with Giardia, but experience no symptoms at all.
* When a person first becomes infected with the giardia parasite, there is a one-two week period before they feel the symptoms of giardiasis. This period between becoming infected and the start of symptoms is known as the Giardia **incubation period.**
* Some of the first signs you may observe in an infected person are diarrhea, vomiting, and increased gas.
* Later on an infected person might feel the symptoms of an upset stomach, bloating, nausea, dehydration and cramps. Some signs that may develop later are weight loss and the swelling of the eyes and joints.
* In children, severe giardiasis may delay physical growth, slow development, and cause malnutrition.

What should you do if you’re infected?

* Discuss treatment options with your doctor.
* The most common treatment plan for Giardia involves prescribed medications/drugs and staying hydrated.

How can giardiasis be prevented?

* Practice good hygiene everywhere (wash hands, etc.)
* Avoid eating food that may be contaminated.
* Avoiding drinking water that may be contaminated.
* Educating families and restaurant employees in personal hygiene.
* Prevent contact /contamination with feces during sex.
* Protect public water supplies against fecal contamination.