Cryptosporidiosis is a diarrheal illness caused by the parasite Cryptosporidium or “Crypto” for short. Symptoms include watery diarrhea, vomiting, fever, loss of appetite and abdominal pain. Symptoms may last up to 10 days. Symptoms may not start for 2 to 14 days after being exposed to the parasite.

Cryptosporidiosis can spread easily; it takes a very small amount of the germ to cause illness. Alcohol based hand sanitizers do not effectively kill Cryptosporidium. Cryptosporidium is very hardy and can survive for months in the environment. It is tolerant to chlorine and can survive for days in properly chlorinated pools. Some infected people do not have symptoms but can still pass the germ on to others.

Cryptosporidium is spread by:

- Eating or drinking contaminated food or beverages
- Touching contaminated hands, surfaces, or objects
- Handling pets and farm animals or their environment.
- Swallowing contaminated recreational or pool water.

To prevent cryptosporidiosis and other diarrheal illnesses:

- Wash hands with soap and water after using the toilet, helping children use the toilet, changing diapers, or handling animals or their environment, and especially before preparing food
- Assist small children with handwashing
- Don’t swallow pool or recreational water or get it in your mouth.
- Don’t change diapers at poolside or “wash your hands” in the pool after changing diapers.
- Take frequent bathroom breaks while swimming
- Do not swim or enter pools, hot tubs, lakes or other recreational water for two weeks after diarrhea symptoms have stopped.
- Avoid eating or drinking unpasteurized milk or juices.

For more information visit the CDC website http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/crypto/