

Giardiasis

Why is Giardiasis important?

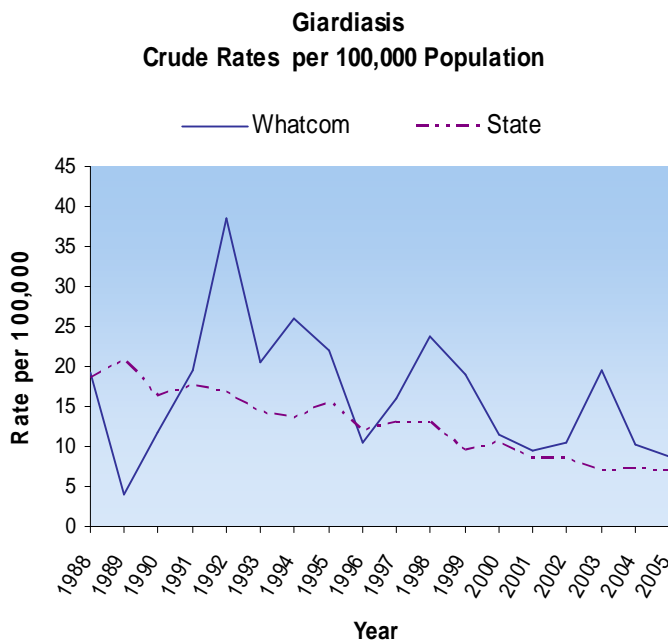
Giardiasis is an infection caused by the parasite *Giardia lamblia* that is carried by humans or animal in the intestinal tract. Symptoms include diarrhea, abdominal pain, nausea, and excessive tiredness.

Giardia can be contracted by drinking contaminated water or food. Person-to-person transmission can also occur, especially among children in child care facilities or through sexual contact. During the summer months, transmission is often related to water sports in or near untreated water. Approximately 31 percent of cases originate during the months of July, August, and September, when recreation exposure to untreated water is greatest. Giardia is more common in children under five years of age.



How are we doing?

The following chart and accompanying table compare Washington and Whatcom County giardia crude incidence rates and number of cases from 1988 through 2005.



Year	Whatcom County		Washington State	
	Rates per 100,000 Population	# of Cases	Rates per 100,000 Population	# of Cases
1988	19.2	23	18.4	851
1989	4.0	5	20.7	979
1990	11.7	15	16.3	792
1991	19.6	26	17.5	876
1992	38.6	53	16.7	860
1993	20.5	29	14.2	747
1994	26.1	38	13.5	722
1995	22.1	33	15.6	852
1996	10.5	16	12.0	666
1997	15.9	25	13.0	738
1998	23.7	38	12.9	740
1999	18.9	31	9.5	553
2000	11.4	19	10.5	617
2001	9.4	16	8.6	512
2002	10.5	18	8.4	510
2003	19.5	34	7.1	435
2004	10.2	18	7.2	444
2005	8.8	16	7.0	437

Since 1997, Whatcom County rates have been higher than Washington State. In 2005, the rate of giardia in Whatcom County (8.8 per 100,000) was comparable with the Washington State rate (7.0 per 100,000).

What remains to be done?

Whatcom County Public Health provides food service inspections and public education on proper food preparation and cooking, as well as appropriate hand-washing techniques. Public Health also investigates each reported case to determine possible origin and to prevent further spread of the disease. Statistical analysis of the potential risk factors identified during the investigation of each case is done. Risk factors are then ranked in order of frequency to determine the cause of the infection. Public Health will continue to educate the public on risks and prevention activities. We will continue to work with other local and State agencies to reduce the occurrence of the disease or associated complications.

GIARDIASIS PREVENTION GUIDELINES:

- ❖ *Pay attention to health advisories and “boil water” notices. To ensure your drinking water is safe during “boil water” notices, always boil, filter, or use bottled water. Also, use this water for washing dishes, fruits, and vegetables.*
- ❖ *Don’t swallow water from lakes, rivers, pools, or jacuzzis. Water swallowed accidentally while swimming may contain the organism.*
- ❖ *Do not swim in public pools or lakes if you have diarrhea.*
- ❖ *Keep children with diarrhea out of childcare or other “out of home care” settings.*
- ❖ *Clean surfaces where diapers are changed after every use.*
- ❖ *Never prepare food for other people if you have diarrhea.*

