

Cryptosporidium

ANGELES National Forest



A HIDDEN RISK!

Cryptosporidium is an organism that may be found in lakes, streams, rivers and springs, and in water systems drawing from these sources. These natural waters may be clear, cold and free-running and can look, smell and taste good. All of these indicators sometimes lead people to mistakenly assume that natural waters are pure and safe to drink.

Some Forest Service water systems within the Angeles National Forest are supplied by surface sources and may be affected by **Cryptosporidium**. These systems have been shut down to protect the public and will remain closed until the problem is resolved. Even in areas where water is supplied, the best way to protect yourself and your family is to boil all water used for drinking or washing dishes for 5 minutes. We apologize for any inconvenience these precautions may cause you.

The Disease

The illness caused by **Cryptosporidium** can make you quite sick, but it is not usually life threatening for people with healthy immune systems. **It does pose a serious threat to people with AIDS or other diseases that weaken the immune system.**

Cryptosporidium can *only* be contracted through swallowing. It does not enter the body through cuts, the ears, or other openings.

Symptoms of this disease are similar to those caused by **Giardia**; diarrhea, headaches, stomach cramps and nausea.

Much like **Giardia**, this parasite survives in the water in a hard shell, cyst form. Once inside the body, however, it develops into an active form. A **Cryptosporidium** cyst measures 3-5 microns (3 microns is about 100 times smaller than the smallest speck of dust you see with the naked eye.)

The *only* reliable way to destroy **Cryptosporidium** in water is boiling for at least 5 minutes. It is not killed by freezing. It survives well in cold stream waters and **cannot be removed** with chlorine or iodine.

Filters certified by the State of California and having the capability to filter down to 0.2 microns are effective in removing cysts from water systems.

To Protect Yourself!

Most people are unaware when they have been infected and return home from vacations before the onset of symptoms. If you suspect you have been exposed to **Cryptosporidium** from untreated water, you should contact your physician for medical advice.

If you would like more information concerning this disease, contact Los Angeles County, Department of Health Services, Health Information at 1-800-427-8700...

What's Being Done?

Although filtration/treatment plants capable of removing these cysts are very costly and conversion from surface springs and streams to deep wells is also costly, the Forest Service has made providing pure water a top priority. Forest Service water systems will be reopened as soon as possible.

For more information contact:

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