

**MSAD # 13 / RSU #83
Health Alert**

**Gastrointestinal Illness – Giardiasis
Important Notice to Parents
<Date>**

Giardiasis is a diarrheal disease caused by the microscopic parasite *Giardia intestinalis*.

Symptoms can include diarrhea, gas, greasy stools that tend to float, bloating, stomach cramps, fever, nausea, and constipation.

Symptoms usually last about 2 - 6 weeks.

Symptoms usually begin within 7 - 10 days, range of 3 - 25 days, after exposure.

Giardia is transmitted by contaminated food or water or person-to-person by the fecal-oral route.

A person can spread *Giardia* while symptomatic. Infected people can also carry *Giardia* for weeks or months. They may or may not have symptoms and can unknowingly infect others.

Any ill individuals should remain home during the symptomatic period and for at least 24 hours after all symptoms resolve. If your child is sick during the day, please do not send them to school the next day even if they are feeling fine.

Frequent hand washing, particularly after using the restroom, assisting someone with diarrhea and/or vomiting, after contact with animals, after swimming, and before and after food preparation will help prevent contact with the parasite.

Contact your primary care provider if gastrointestinal symptoms last more than a few days or are severe.

Please contact the school nurse, Mel Chadbourne, RN if you have any questions. More information is also available at the Maine CDC web site.