

Cryptosporidium and Giardia:

New York State law requires water suppliers to notify their customers about the risks of Cryptosporidium and Giardia. These pathogens are of concern because they are found in surface water and ground water under the influence of surface water throughout the United States. Filtration and disinfection are the best methods for use against them, but 100% removal or inactivation cannot be guaranteed. Cryptosporidiosis and Giardiasis are intestinal illnesses caused by these microscopic parasites. Symptoms of infection include nausea, diarrhea, and cramps. Most healthy people can overcome the disease within a few weeks.

In 2017, the presence of Cryptosporidium and Giardia was tested for in Otisco, Ontario, and Skaneateles lakes as part of the routine plans of OCWA and the City of Syracuse Water Department. Both the raw lake waters and the treated waters were tested. Additionally, OCWA's Otisco Lake Water Treatment Plant tested its recycled wash water, which is water that is reclaimed after filter backwashing and returned to the treatment plant influent stream for retreatment.

OCWA took a total of 36 Cryptosporidium and Giardia samples in 2017 representing water originating from Otisco Lake. Monthly samples were taken from the Raw (untreated) water and the Finished (treated) water. The Recycled water was also sampled monthly. Cryptosporidium was detected in the Raw water samples taken in April. Giardia was detected in the Raw water and the Recycled water sample taken in January. Giardia was also detected in the Recycled water in March as well as the December Raw water sample. None of the Finished water samples from water originating in Otisco Lake had any Cryptosporidium or Giardia detected.

OCWA took a total of 20 Cryptosporidium and Giardia samples in 2017 representing water originating from Lake Ontario. Raw water samples were taken monthly for the months of January through March. Both Raw water and Finished water was sampled for May through December. The only detection was the February Raw water sample for Giardia.

The City of Syracuse Water Dept. took a total of 24 Cryptosporidium and Giardia samples in 2017 representing water originating from Skaneateles Lake. Two Raw water samples (one from each intake) were sampled monthly. No Cryptosporidium or Giardia were detected in any of the City of Syracuse's Raw water samples.

Some people may be more vulnerable to disease causing microorganisms or pathogens in drinking water than the general population. Immuno-compromised persons such as persons with cancer undergoing chemotherapy, persons who have undergone organ transplants, people with HIV/AIDS or other immune system disorders, some elderly, and infants can be particularly at risk from infections. These people should seek advice from their health care provider about their drinking water. EPA/CDC guidelines on appropriate means to lessen the risk of infection by Cryptosporidium, Giardia and other microbial pathogens are available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline (800-426-4791).

Individuals who think they may have Cryptosporidiosis or Giardiasis should contact their health care provider immediately. For additional information on Cryptosporidiosis or Giardiasis you may contact the Onondaga County Health Department, in writing at 421 Montgomery St., 12th Floor, Syracuse, NY 13202 or by calling 315-435-6600.

Bottled water may be a viable alternative, however the same degree of caution applied to your tap water should be used in selecting a bottled water supplier. To that end, a list of certified bottled waters for sale in New York (along with their sources) can be obtained from the New York State Department of Health by calling 1-800-458-1158.

The EPA's Surface Water Treatment Rule (SWTR) established water treatment standards specifically designed to ensure the removal or deactivation of Giardia and other microbial contaminants. The EPA is currently working on enhancing these standards to further ensure protection against exposure to Cryptosporidium from drinking water. The OCWA and MWB treatment plants are in full compliance with all current operational, monitoring, and reporting requirements. OCWA's internal performance standards are more stringent than the law currently requires.

For example, the SWTR requires a treatment plant's finished water turbidity (a measure of clarity used to check filtration particulate removal) to be less than 0.30 NTUs 95% of the time. For 2017 the Otisco Filtration Plant finished water turbidity was less than 0.08 NTUs 95% of the time based on continuous four-hour sampling intervals. The Ontario Filtration Plant finished water turbidity, for 2017, averaged less than 0.050 NTUs 95% of the time, again based on four-hour sampling intervals. Cryptosporidium regulations contain improved filtration performance requirements to ensure removal of any protozoans that may be present. Part of the enhanced filtration requirements involved lowering the turbidity criteria from the 0.50 to the 0.30 NTU range. Both of OCWA's treatment plants are doing better than the regulated levels.