

Cryptosporidium and Giardia:

New York State law requires water suppliers to notify their customers about the risks of cryptosporidium and giardia, which are intestinal illnesses caused by these microscopic parasites. 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 these pathogens, but 100% removal or inactivation cannot be guaranteed. Symptoms of infection from cryptosporidium and giardia include nausea, diarrhea, and cramps. Most healthy people can overcome the disease within a few weeks.

In 2022, Otisco, Ontario, and Skaneateles lakes were tested for cryptosporidium and giardia as part of routine monitoring conducted by OCWA and the City of Syracuse Water Department. Additionally, our Otisco WTP tested its recycled wash water, which is water that is reclaimed after filter backwashing (cleaning) and returned to the treatment plant influent stream for retreatment.

We collected a total of six samples from our Otisco WTP and tested them for cryptosporidium and giardia. In January and February, two samples each were collected from the raw (untreated) water, the entry point (treated) water, and the recycled water. Neither giardia nor cryptosporidium were detected in any of the water samples originating from Otisco Lake.

In addition, we collected a total of two samples from our Ontario WTP (one at raw water and one at entry point) and tested these for cryptosporidium and giardia. Neither cryptosporidium nor giardia were detected in either water sample originating from Lake Ontario.

The City of Syracuse Water Department collected a total of 24 samples from Skaneateles Lake (one each month from each of the two intakes) and tested them for cryptosporidium and giardia. Neither cryptosporidium nor 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 people, and infants can be particularly at risk from infections. These individuals should seek advice from their health care provider about their drinking water. USEPA/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 at 421 Montgomery St., 12th Floor, Syracuse, NY 13202 or by calling 315-435-6600.

Importantly, the same degree of caution applied to your tap water source 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 NYSDOH by calling 1-800-458-1158.

USEPA's Surface Water Treatment Rule ("SWTR") established water treatment standards specifically designed to ensure the removal or deactivation of cryptosporidium, giardia, and other microbial contaminants. USEPA is currently working on enhancing these standards to further ensure protection against exposure to cryptosporidium from drinking water. Our Otisco and Ontario WTPs are in full compliance with all current operational, monitoring, and reporting requirements.

In addition, our internal performance standards are more stringent than the law currently requires. For example, the SWTR requires a treatment plant's combined filter effluent water turbidity (a measure of clarity used to check filtration particulate removal) to be less than 0.30 NTUs 95% of the time. In 2022, our Otisco WTP's combined filter effluent turbidity was less than 0.07 NTUs 95% of the time based on continuous four-hour sampling intervals. Our Ontario WTP's combined filter effluent turbidity in 2022 averaged less than 0.08 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 involve lowering the turbidity criteria from 0.50 NTU to the 0.30 NTU range. Both of our treatment plants are achieving turbidity results much lower than the regulated levels.