



# Cyclosporiasis

## **What is Cyclosporiasis?**

Cyclosporiasis is an intestinal illness caused by the parasite *Cyclospora cayetanensis*. People can become infected with *Cyclospora* by consuming food or water contaminated with the parasite.

## **How is Cyclospora spread?**

The *Cyclospora* parasite is found in the stool of infected persons and is spread when another person ingests something, such as food or water, which was contaminated with the infectious stool matter.

The *Cyclospora* parasite is not able to cause illness in another person right away, but rather needs time (days or weeks) after being passed in a bowel movement to mature and become infectious. Therefore, it is unlikely that *Cyclospora* is spread directly from one person to another.

Once the parasite matures in the environment, it may find its way into drinking water, recreational water or food and then cause human illness.

Outbreaks of illness caused by *Cyclospora* in North America have been linked to eating fresh fruits and vegetables imported from developing countries that may have been in contact with contaminated water or the stool matter of infected workers. Some examples include raspberries, basil and lettuce.

## **What symptoms should I watch for?**

Most people experience frequent watery diarrhea, abdominal cramps, vomiting, nausea, loss of appetite, and sometimes fever.

Symptoms generally begin one week after you are exposed to the parasite. Some people who are infected with *Cyclospora* have no symptoms at all. If left untreated, this illness can last for a few days to a month or longer, and may return one or more times.

## **What is the treatment for Cyclosporiasis?**

Consulting your health care provider is recommended to discuss treatment options such as antibiotics.

## **How do I protect myself and others?**

It is important to wash fruits and vegetables as thoroughly as possible before eating them using treated water.

Do not drink untreated surface water from a spring, stream, river, lake, pond or shallow well.

When traveling to a developing country make sure that you drink bottled water, or boil untreated surface water that is used for drinking, making ice cubes, washing uncooked fruits and vegetables, making baby formula, brushing teeth and washing dentures or contact lenses.

## **Is there anything special I need to know?**

If you are diagnosed with Cyclosporiasis and you provide services to others, particularly seniors or children, you should not go to work while you are having symptoms.

Your employer will determine when it is safe for you to return to work.

It is possible that even after you are feeling better you will still be shedding the parasite in your stool for a period of time. To prevent spreading the disease to people around you, always practice good hand washing and hygiene and stay home when you are ill.

For more information call the Communicable Disease Team: ext. 8809



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