

Cyclosporiasis (*Cyclospora*)

What is *Cyclospora*?

Cyclospora is a parasite that causes a diarrheal illness called cyclosporiasis.

How is it spread?

People become infected by consuming food or water contaminated with feces that contains the parasite. It is not spread directly from one person to another.

Where is it found?

Cyclospora is found in many countries but is most common in tropical and subtropical regions. Foodborne outbreaks have been linked to various types of fresh produce, including raspberries, basil, cilantro, snow peas, and mesclun and romaine lettuce. No commercially frozen or canned produce has been implicated.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of cyclosporiasis usually include:

- Watery diarrhea
- Stomach cramps
- Loss of appetite
- Weight loss
- Slight fever
- Nausea
- Fatigue

Symptoms usually begin about 1 week (range, 2 days-2 weeks) after exposure to the parasite.

How long does it last?

If the infection is not treated, symptoms can last for several weeks to months. The symptoms may go in cycles in which you seem to get better for a few days, then feel worse, before the illness ends.

The infection is usually treated with the antibiotic trimethoprim/sulfamethoxazole. No highly effective alternative antibiotic has been identified yet for patients who do not respond to the standard treatment or have a sulfa allergy. Contact your healthcare provider to discuss treatment options. Diarrhea should be managed by drinking plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration.

What can I do to minimize my risk?

You can reduce your risk by following these recommendations:

- Avoid food or water that may have been contaminated with feces.
- Use caution when traveling in countries with minimal water treatment and sanitation systems by avoiding tap water, fountain drinks, ice, and raw foods like fresh produce.

Washing of produce, or routine chemical disinfection or sanitizing methods, are unlikely to kill *Cyclospora*.

What should I do if I have symptoms?

Contact your healthcare provider if you have concerns about your health. They may ask you to submit a stool specimen to diagnose the illness.

To report a suspected foodborne or waterborne illness, call the Minnesota Department of Health at 1-877-366-3455 (or 651-201-5655 from the Twin Cities) or email health.foodill@state.mn.us.

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