

Background

Cyclosporiasis is an intestinal infection that is caused by the parasite *Cyclospora cayetanensis*. People of any age are at risk of infection. People living in or traveling to tropical or subtropical regions may be at increased risk, but infection can be acquired worldwide. In the United States, most cases of *Cyclospora* infection are detected in the spring and summer.

Transmission

Transmission can occur by eating food or drinking water contaminated with feces that contain *Cyclospora*. When *Cyclospora* is shed in feces (stool), it is not immediately infectious. The parasite requires one to two weeks in the outside environment (such as soil) to mature and become capable of making someone else sick. Because of this, direct contact with an infected person is unlikely. The primary source of the parasite is not yet known, and it is unknown whether animals can be infected and pass the infection on to people.

Incubation Period (time from exposure to symptoms)

People may start to feel ill two to 14 days (usually one week) after eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water. Symptoms of cyclosporiasis may come and go and, if untreated, illness can last for a few days to a month or longer. Some infected people may not have symptoms.

Symptoms

- Watery diarrhea
- Frequent, sometimes explosive bowel movements
- Extreme fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Substantial weight loss
- Increased gas and bloating
- Stomach cramps, nausea, and vomiting
- Low-grade fever

Testing

Laboratory tests are available to look for *Cyclospora* in stool. Because many laboratories do not routinely check for *Cyclospora* in stool samples, your doctor must specifically request a *Cyclospora* test if cyclosporiasis is suspected.

Treatment

Cyclosporiasis is treated with antibiotics along with rest and drinking plenty of fluids to maintain hydration.

- You can treat an infection with antibiotics, but most people can recover without medical intervention, although it will take longer.
- Without treatment, the sickness can persist anywhere from several days to more than a month.
- Immunocompromised patients may need longer treatments with higher doses of antibiotics.
- People with severe or long-lasting diarrhea should call their doctor.

Prevention

- Avoid consuming food or water that may be contaminated with feces.
- Wash hands with soap and water after using the bathroom and before and after eating or preparing food.
- Wash all fruits and vegetables thoroughly under running water before eating, cutting, or cooking.
- Cut away any damaged or bruised areas on fruits and vegetables before preparing and eating.
- Buy whole heads of lettuce — not pre-washed bags. Remove the outer two to three leaves and wash the remaining leaves under water.
- Separate and wash all cilantro and basil leaves.
- Trim the root end and peel the outer layer of green onions.
- Gently rub snow peas and other vegetables with your hands or brush as you wash them.
- Consider avoiding fresh fruits like raspberries with exteriors that are harder to wash.
- Freezing does not eliminate the parasite.
- The safest method to eliminate the parasite is to cook food thoroughly.

What to do if you think you may have cyclospora:

People experiencing gastrointestinal illnesses, such as sudden and ongoing diarrhea, are encouraged to contact their health care provider for testing and treatment.

For additional information, please visit:

[Cyclosporiasis \(Cyclospora\) CDC Info](#)

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