

What is cyclospora?

Cyclospora cayetanensis is a parasite (germ) that can make people sick. It is composed of one cell and is too small to be seen without a microscope.

Cyclospora infection is called cyclosporiasis.

What are the symptoms of having cyclospora?

The most common symptom is watery diarrhea. Other symptoms can include weight loss, bloating, lots of gas, cramps, nausea, vomiting, being tired, sore muscles, fever, and not feeling hungry. These symptoms can also be caused by a lot of other diseases. Some people who become infected with cyclospora may not get symptoms. Sometimes people who seem to be getting better may get sick again (relapse). For most people, the diarrhea will last for about a few days, but if not treated, some people can be sick for several weeks. It usually takes about 5 to 7 days to get sick after you have eaten a food with cyclospora.

How is cyclospora spread?

The parasite is spread when people eat food or water that has come into contact with infected feces (stool). Cyclospora germs need time (1-2 weeks) after being passed in the stool to be able to make a person sick. Because of this, cyclospora infection probably does not spread directly from person to person.

Where does cyclospora occur?

Cyclosporiasis occurs in many countries, but it seems to be most common in tropical and subtropical regions. In areas where cyclosporiasis has been studied, the risk for infection is seasonal. In the United States, individual cases of cyclosporiasis are usually due to exposure to contaminated food or water in a country where it is more common.

What kind of foods are likely to have cyclospora?

In the United States, foodborne outbreaks of cyclosporiasis have been linked to various types of imported fresh produce, including fruits such as raspberries. These fresh fruits and vegetables probably came into direct contact with an infected person or contaminated water in a country where the parasite is more common. Washing fruits and vegetables with water and a brush may help get rid of cyclospora. Cooking will kill the cyclospora germs. Fruits and vegetables that are peeled should be safe to eat.

How is cyclospora diagnosed and treated?

If you think you have cyclosporiasis, you should see your healthcare provider. Your healthcare provider can take a stool sample and send it to a laboratory for testing. If you have cyclospora in your stool, you may be treated with antibiotics or a combination of antibiotics. If you have diarrhea, you should rest and drink plenty of clear fluids. Do not take any medicine until asking your healthcare provider about it. People who have already had a cyclospora infection can get it again.

Are there any restrictions for people infected with cyclospora?

Yes. In order to protect the public, foodhandlers who have cyclospora in their stool, must stay out of work until their symptoms have resolved.

Health care providers are required by law to report cases of cyclosporiasis to the local board of health.

How can the spread of cyclospora be prevented?

Avoiding food or water that may have been contaminated with feces is the best way to prevent cyclosporiasis and other foodborne germs. Wash hands with soap and warm water before and after handling or preparing fruits and vegetables. Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and counter tops with soap and hot water between the preparation of raw meat, poultry, and seafood products and the preparation of fruits and vegetables that will not be cooked. Wash or rinse all fruits and vegetables thoroughly under clean running water before eating, cutting, or cooking. Fruits and vegetables that are labeled “prewashed” do not need to be washed again at home. Scrub firm fruits and vegetables, such as melons and cucumbers, with a clean produce brush. Cut away any damaged or bruised areas on fruits and vegetables before preparing and eating. Refrigerate cut, peeled, or cooked fruits and vegetables as soon as possible, or within two hours.