

Cyclospora

April 2014 | Page 1 of 2

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 (days or even 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. It is unknown whether animals can be infected or spread the infection to people.

What kind of foods are likely to have cyclospora?

People have gotten cyclospora infections from some fresh fruits and vegetables that probably came into direct contact with an infected person or contaminated water. In the United States, foodborne outbreaks of cyclosporiasis have been linked to various types of imported fresh produce, including fruits such as raspberries. 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 a doctor. Your doctor 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 doctor about it. People who have already had a cyclospora infection can get it again.

Are there any restrictions for people infected with cyclospora?

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

In order to protect the public, workers at food-related businesses who have cyclospora in their stool, must stay out of work until they don't have diarrhea and **lab tests** on one to **two different stool samples** show that there are no cyclospora germs. Workers in food-related businesses who have diarrhea and live with someone who has cyclosporiasis must also show that they have none of the



germs in their stool. Food-related businesses include restaurants, sandwich shops, hospital kitchens, supermarkets, dairy or food-processing plants. This regulation also includes workers in schools, residential programs, day-care and health care facilities, that feed, give mouth care or dispense medications to clients.

How can the spread of cyclospora be prevented?

Careful handwashing helps prevent the spread of cyclospora. Always wash your hands after going to the bathroom, changing a diaper, and before touching food. Use plenty of soap and warm water, and get good soap lather on your hands. Use a lot of friction (rubbing) to loosen and wash away germs.

Where can I get more information?

- Your local board of health, listed in the phone book under government.
- Your family doctor or nurse.
- The Massachusetts Department of Public Health Division of Epidemiology and Immunization (617) 983-6800 or toll-free at (888) 658-2850.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at:
<http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/cyclosporiasis/>

