

CYCLOSPORIASIS

What is Cyclosporiasis?

An intestinal illness caused by Cyclospora (Cyclospora Cayetanensis), which is a parasite (a living organism) that lives or thrives on the inside of another organism

How do people become ill?

People are infected by consuming food or water that contains the parasite. If not treated, the illness may last from a few days to several weeks. Cyclosporiasis is not usually life-threatening.



What are the symptoms?

Cyclospora infects the small intestine (bowel) and usually causes watery diarrhea with frequent and sometimes explosive bowel movements. Symptoms may seem to go away and then return one or more times.

People who are infected may not experience symptoms, which begin after one week of being infected but can last 2-14 days or more.

How to treat symptoms

A doctor can prescribe a 7-10 day course of the oral antibiotic trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole (TMP/SMX). Resting and drinking plenty of fluids is also important for those experiencing diarrhea.

People in poor health or those who are immuno-compromised may be at a higher risk for severe or long illness. For testing, contact your health care provider.



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Food Safety Information

Cyclospora cayetanensis is very resilient. In refrigerated foods and fresh produce, the parasite can survive for weeks to months because it forms a protective cyst (oocyst). Regular washing and standard chemical disinfectants do not kill it. Due to its resistant nature, it survives until the food spoils or dries out.

Infectious State

After leaving a host in a bowel movement, the parasite requires 1-2 weeks in the environment to mature and become infectious. It usually spreads via contaminated irrigation water or cross-contamination during food prep.

How to Kill It

The only sure way is by cooking food to an internal temperature of 158°F (70°C).

At-Risk Foods

Outbreaks are frequently linked to fresh, ready-to-eat produce that is rarely cooked, such as raspberries, basil, cilantro and bagged salad mixes.



How do I reduce my risk?

- Wash hands with soap and water before and after handling or preparing raw fruits and vegetables
- Wash all fruits and vegetables thoroughly under running water before eating, cutting or cooking
- Scrub firm fruits and vegetables, such as melons and cucumbers, with a clean produce brush
- Refrigerate cut, peeled or cooked fruits and vegetables within two hours
- Avoid food or water that may be contaminated with feces (human waste)