



PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET

Boston Public Health Commission
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Cyclospora

What is cyclospora?

Cyclospora is a parasite (germ) that can make people sick. The parasite is too small to see without a microscope. Although cyclospora is found all over the world, outbreaks in the United States only recently began to be recognized. Cyclospora infection is called cyclosporiasis.

What are the symptoms of having cyclospora?

The most common symptom is diarrhea, which can occur in large amounts. Other symptoms can include weight loss, bloating, gas, cramps, nausea, vomiting, being tired, sore muscles, and loss of appetite. Sometimes people who seem to be getting better may get sick again (relapse). For most people, the diarrhea will last for only a few days, but if not treated, some people can be sick for several weeks. It usually takes about 7 days to get sick after you have eaten food or swallowed water contaminated with cyclospora.

How is cyclospora spread?

The parasite is spread when people eat food or drink 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 become 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 kinds of foods are likely to have cyclospora?

People have gotten cyclospora infections from fresh fruits and vegetables, such as raspberries and lettuce, that probably came into direct contact with an infected person or contaminated water. Fruits and vegetables grown or packed outside of the United States may have a higher risk of having cyclospora on them. 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 are safer to eat.

How is cyclospora diagnosed and treated?

If you think you might have cyclospora, you should see a doctor. Your doctor can take a stool sample and send it to a lab for testing. If you have cyclospora, 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.

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How can the spread of cyclospora be prevented?

- Wash fresh fruits and vegetables thoroughly using clean, drinkable water. Peeling fruits and vegetables should make them safer.
- Only drink water from a source you know to be safe.
- Careful hand washing helps prevent the spread of cyclospora as well as many other diseases. Always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water before eating, before handling food, after using the toilet, and after changing diapers.
- If you are taking care of someone who has diarrhea, scrub your hands with plenty of soap and water after cleaning the bathroom, helping the person use the toilet, or changing diapers, soiled clothes or soiled sheets.
- If you or your child has persistent diarrhea (with or without a fever), or if the diarrhea is very bad, call your doctor or health center for advice.
- Cook all food from animal sources thoroughly. If the meat or poultry is still pink in the center, it is not thoroughly cooked.

Are there any restrictions for people infected with cyclospora?

There are no special restrictions for people diagnosed with cyclospora infection. However, in order to protect the public, people who have diarrhea who work in food-related jobs must stay out of work until they are completely well. Food-related jobs include: working in a restaurant, sandwich shop, hospital kitchen, cafeteria, supermarket or grocery store, dairy or food-processing plant. People who feed, give mouth care, or give medicine to patients or clients in schools, residential programs, day-care, and health facilities could also put the public at risk, and these people must also stay out of work until they are completely well.

**For more information, please contact
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