

CYCLOSPORIASIS

What is cyclosporiasis?

Cyclosporiasis is an illness caused by an infection with a tiny, one-celled parasite called *Cyclospora cayetanensis*. The first known human cases of cyclosporiasis were reported in 1979.

People of all ages are at risk for infection with *Cyclospora*. *Cyclospora* is commonly found in many developing countries, in particular, tropical and sub-tropical countries. Eating fruits or vegetables from these countries can also cause infection if the food is not properly washed before eating.

What are the symptoms of cyclosporiasis?

The most common symptoms include:

- Watery diarrhea
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Bloating
- Abdominal cramps
- Increased flatulence
- Fatigue
- Weight loss

Fever is rare. Some infected people may have few or no symptoms. Symptoms usually appear within one week to two weeks after eating food or drinking liquids contaminated with feces containing the parasite.

People are usually able to clear the parasite from their bodies without treatment, but diarrhea and other symptoms can persist for weeks. Symptoms can return in individuals who do not receive treatment. Individuals with a weak immune system can easily be infected and have diarrhea lasting months.

How does cyclosporiasis spread?

Cyclospora is spread by eating foods, drinking or swimming in water contaminated with feces containing the parasite. Generally, *Cyclospora* is not spread directly from person to person because when the parasite is passed from the body it needs time to develop in soil or some other warm, moist external environment before it can infect another person.

How is cyclosporiasis treated?

Antibiotic treatment is available for cyclosporiasis and must be prescribed by a physician.

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How can cyclosporiasis be prevented?

- Washing hands thoroughly is the most effective way to prevent the spread of the disease
- Wash hands thoroughly after using the washroom and before handling food
- Avoid food or water that may be contaminated with feces
- When travelling to developing countries, do not eat fruits or vegetables that are not properly washed or peeled
- Drink water from a safe supply, either treated or boiled. If the source of water supply is unknown, drink bottled water