

CYCLOSPORIASIS

What is cyclosporiasis?

Cyclosporiasis is a gastrointestinal illness caused by infection with the parasite *Cyclospora cayetanensis*, and is commonly characterized by frequent watery diarrhea. People are infected by eating food or drinking water contaminated with the parasite.

Cyclospora is not endemic in Canada. Most reported cases in Ontario are infected when visiting an endemic country (e.g., in the Caribbean, South and Central America, South and South East Asia). In the last several years, outbreaks of cyclosporiasis have been reported in Canada, the United States, and countries in Europe.

How does cyclosporiasis spread?

Cyclospora is spread by eating foods or drinking water contaminated with the parasite. When the parasite is passed from the body, it needs time to develop in a warm, moist external environment (e.g., soil) before it can infect another person. The infection is unlikely to spread from person to person.

What are the symptoms of cyclosporiasis?

Cyclosporiasis is commonly characterized by frequent watery diarrhea. Other symptoms include anorexia, fatigue, abdominal cramps, nausea, and myalgia. Some infected people may have few or no symptoms.

Symptoms usually appear about one week after eating food or drinking liquids contaminated with the parasite. Left untreated, symptoms typically last six to seven weeks, vary in intensity, and may follow a relapsing course. Symptoms usually improve within two to three days of starting the appropriate antibiotic treatment.

How is cyclosporiasis diagnosed and treated?

Cyclosporiasis can be diagnosed through a test ordered by a health care provider. Antibiotic treatment is available for cyclosporiasis and must be prescribed by a physician. Visit a health care provider if you are experiencing symptoms similar to cyclosporiasis.

How can cyclosporiasis be prevented?

It can be difficult to prevent cyclosporiasis, however you can help reduce the risk through the following measures:

- Before consuming produce, wash it thoroughly in safe water to help reduce the risk of contamination with *Cyclospora*. (Note: washing produce does not always completely eliminate the risk of cyclosporiasis.)
- Consume fresh produce grown in countries where *Cyclospora* is not commonly found (e.g., Canada)
- Cook produce imported from countries in regions where *Cyclospora* is found
- When travelling to a country/region where *Cyclospora* is found:
 - drink water from a safe source
 - eat cooked produce, or produce that you can wash (using safe water) and peel yourself

July 2018

Source: Cyclosporiasis (*Cyclospora*), Government of Canada,

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/cyclosporiasis-cyclospora.html>

