

CYCLOSPORIASIS Q&A

What is cyclosporiasis?

Cyclosporiasis is a diarrheal illness caused by *Cyclospora cayetanensis*, a parasite composed of one cell. In the last several years, outbreaks of cyclosporiasis have been reported in the United States and Canada.

Who gets cyclosporiasis?

People of all ages and from all over the world can become infected with *Cyclospora*. An outbreak of cyclosporiasis associated with imported berries occurred in Georgia in May 2000.

How is Cyclospora spread?

Usually, *Cyclospora* is spread by people ingesting water or food contaminated with infected feces. Outbreaks have been linked to different types of fresh produce. *Cyclospora* needs days or weeks after being passed in stool to become infectious, so it is unlikely that *Cyclospora* is spread from one person to another. It is unknown whether animals can be infected and pass infection to people.

What are the symptoms of cyclosporiasis?

Symptoms may include watery diarrhea, loss of appetite, substantial weight loss, bloating, increased gas, stomach cramps, nausea, muscle aches, low-grade fever, fatigue and vomiting. Some people do not have any symptoms.

How soon do symptoms appear after infection?

It usually takes about 1 week to become ill after becoming infected.

When and for how long is a person able to spread Cyclospora?

Direct person-to-person transmission is unlikely because *Cyclospora* is not infectious when first passed in stool. The parasite needs days or weeks after being passed in feces to become infectious.

How can a person find out if they have cyclosporiasis?

A health care provider will ask an ill person to submit stool specimens for laboratory testing. Several stool specimens may be needed over several days, because testing for *Cyclospora* infection is difficult. Identification of this parasite requires special laboratory tests that are not routinely done.

What is the treatment for cyclosporiasis?

People with diarrhea should rest and drink plenty of fluids. *Cyclospora* is treated specifically with a combination of two antibiotics: trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole (TMP-SMX). No alternative drugs have been identified for people who are unable to take sulfa drugs. See your health care provider for other treatment recommendations.

How can cyclosporiasis be prevented?

Avoiding water or food that may be contaminated with stool may help prevent *Cyclospora* infection. People who have previously been infected with *Cyclospora* can become infected again.

Where can I get additional information on cyclosporiasis?

Contact the Georgia Division of Public Health, Epidemiology Branch, by email at gaepinfo@dhr.state.ga.us. The following web site may be useful:

- CDC Cyclosporiasis Fact Sheet <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/cyclospora/default.htm>