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Disease Investigation Branch
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Cyclospora

What is Cyclospora?

Cyclospora cayentanensis is a small parasite that causes cyclosporiasis, an illness of the intestines.

How do you get it?

People can get cyclosporiasis by ingesting contaminated water or food. Generally, cyclosporiasis is very rare in the United States, however, there have been some outbreaks in the United States linked to various types of imported fresh fruits and vegetables, such as raspberries, basil, snow peas, and mesclun lettuce. It is not transmitted person-to-person since humans shed a non-infectious form of the parasite in their stool.

What are the symptoms of cyclospora?

The most common symptoms are watery diarrhea, loss of appetite, abdominal pain, nausea and sometimes vomiting.

When do symptoms start?

The symptoms usually start about 1 week after a person is exposed to the parasite but can range from 1-20 days. Symptoms last for about 10-24 days but can be longer in persons who are immunocompromised.

What is the treatment for cyclosporiasis?

A doctor can prescribe an oral medicine that works for the majority of cases. If this illness is not treated, the illness can last longer. Fluid and electrolyte replacement is also important for anyone experiencing diarrhea.

Should a person with cyclosporiasis go to work or school?

Students with diarrhea should stay home from school until the diarrhea stops. Food handlers, day care workers, and health care workers should only return to work when they are no longer symptomatic.

How do I find out if I have cyclosporiasis?

Laboratory diagnosis can be made by examining stool specimens collected on different days. The Ova and Parasite test is needed to determine the cause because symptoms are similar to intestinal illness caused by some bacteria and viruses.

Risk in Hawaii

No cases of cyclosporiasis have been identified in a Hawaii resident in the past 10 years. However, nationally there has been an increase in domestically acquired cyclosporiasis outbreaks identified from pre-packaged salad mix and vegetable trays at chain restaurants and convenience stores. Domestically acquired cases typically rises during the spring and summer, usually in May, June and July. See the CDC website for updates on cyclosporiasis outbreaks.

<https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/cyclosporiasis/outbreaks/index.html>

How can you keep from getting it?

There is no vaccine to prevent cyclospora infection.

Do not drink water or eat food that could be contaminated with human or animal waste.

Do not drink untreated water (ponds, streams, rivers).

Boiling water can kill the parasite. Iodine and chlorine **do not** kill the parasite.

Avoid swimming while ill with diarrhea until 2 weeks after diarrhea resolves.

Avoid high-risk food and drinks when traveling to the developing world:

- Raw vegetables and salads and fruits that cannot be peeled;
- Drinks with ice, or ice cream;
- Food from street vendors;
- Tap water, instead of safe bottled water;
- Foods that are not thoroughly cooked and served hot.

Rinse all fruits and vegetables with running water before eating, cutting, or cooking.

Wash cutting boards thoroughly after contact with each food, so that the boards do not contaminate the next food prepared.

For more information, see the CDC's website at <https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/cyclosporiasis/index.html>