



Cyclosporiasis

What is it?

Cyclosporiasis is an intestinal infection caused by a parasite called *Cyclospora cayatanensis*. In the past, *Cyclospora* infection was usually found in people who lived or travelled in developing countries, however it is now common in Canada and world-wide. People of all ages are at risk of infection.

How is it spread?

Cyclospora is spread by ingesting food, water or swimming water that has been contaminated with infectious feces (stool).

Cyclospora needs days to weeks out in the environment after being passed in a bowel movement to become infectious. Therefore, it is unlikely that *Cyclospora* is passed directly from one person to another.

What are the symptoms and when do they occur?

Symptoms usually appear one to fourteen days after being ingested. The most common symptom of Cyclosporiasis is profuse, non-bloody, water diarrhea with explosive episodes. Other symptoms can include nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, abdominal bloating or cramping, fatigue and weight loss. Fever can also occur. Not everyone infected with Cyclosporiasis has symptoms.

If not treated, the illness may last a few days to a month or longer. Symptoms may seem to go away and then return one or more times (relapse). People who have previously been infected with *Cyclospora* can become re-infected.

How can I protect myself and prevent the spread?

To prevent the spread to yourself or others, the following measures should be practiced:

- Avoid water and food that may be contaminated with feces.

- Wash all fruit and vegetables thoroughly.
- Practice thorough hand washing.
- Avoid unpasteurized milk or milk products.
- When travelling, camping or hiking, or if a boil water advisory has been issued, bring water to a rolling boil for five full minutes. This water can then be used for drinking, brushing teeth, making ice, washing produce and washing dishes.
- Do not handle food for others if you are experiencing symptoms.

Cyclosporiasis must be reported to the Medical Officer of Health as required by the Health Promotion and Protection Act.

For more information, please contact a member of Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit's Infectious Disease Team.



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