

Cyclosporiasis

Fact Sheet



Maine Center for Disease
Control and Prevention

An Office of the
Department of Health and Human Services

What is cyclosporiasis?

Cyclosporiasis is an intestinal infection caused by *Cyclospora* parasites. These germs can only be seen with a microscope. The first known human cases of illness were reported in 1979.

How is it spread?

It is spread by drinking or swimming in contaminated water or eating food that has the parasite in it. It needs time in the environment (days or weeks) after being passed in a bowel movement to become infectious. Therefore, it is unlikely that it is passed directly from one person to another. The time between being exposed and becoming sick is usually about 1 week. Humans are the only known hosts.

Who can get it?

People of all ages may get sick. Persons with underlying illnesses can develop more severe symptoms. People living or traveling in countries where this is common may be at increased risk for infection.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Symptoms include watery diarrhea with frequent, sometimes explosive bowel movements. Other symptoms can include loss of appetite, loss of large amounts of weight, bloating, increased gas, stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, muscle aches, low-grade fever, and fatigue. Some people who are infected do not have any symptoms.

How will I know if I have an infection?

Speak with your healthcare provider if you have symptoms. Your provider may request a stool sample to test in a lab.

How is it treated?

This infection may be treated with a combination of two antibiotics. See your health care provider to discuss treatment options. People who have diarrhea should also rest and drink plenty of fluids.

How can I prevent illness?

Thoroughly wash all fresh fruits and vegetables, particularly if traveling abroad. People who have previously been infected with this parasite can become infected again.

How common is this illness?

It is a relatively rare cause of diarrhea in the United States. Illness occurs more often in the summer months than the winter. In the US, foodborne outbreaks with this parasite have been linked to various types of imported fresh produce.

Where can I get more information?

For more information about your illness, contact your healthcare provider.

You can also contact the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention by calling 1-800-821-5821 or access the Maine CDC website at <http://www.maine.gov/idepi>. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website <http://www.cdc.gov/> is another excellent source of health information.