

Cyclosporiasis: What to Know

What is cyclosporiasis?

Cyclosporiasis is an intestinal illness caused by a Cyclospora parasite, an organism (a living thing) that lives on or inside of another organism. Infection most commonly occurs when individuals consume contaminated food or water.¹

What are the symptoms?

Individuals infected with cyclosporiasis typically show signs and symptoms between 2-14 days, often within one week.¹ The primary symptoms of infection is watery, often profuse or explosive, diarrheas. Other symptoms can include loss of appetite, stomach cramps, weight loss, muscle aches, nausea, vomiting, and fatigue. Not everyone who is infected has symptoms.²

How does cyclosporiasis spread?

Cyclosporiasis is not typically transmitted from person-to-person, but rather by eating or drinking food and water that has been contaminated with feces (stool or poop). Once Cyclospora is passed in a bowel movement, it takes at least one to two weeks outside of the body for it to become infectious.

Who is at risk?

Outbreaks of cyclosporiasis in the United States have been linked to contaminated fresh produce.³

Individuals who live in or are traveling to tropical or subtropical areas of the world where cyclosporiasis regularly occurs are at higher risk for infection. Children, older adults, people who are pregnant, and individuals in poor health or those who are immunocompromised may be at higher risk for severe or long illness.

How to reduce risk?

The best way to prevent cyclosporiasis is to avoid consuming food or water that may be contaminated with feces and following food safety handling recommendations for safe preparation and storage.^{3,4}

- Wash hands with soap and water before preparing raw fruits and vegetables.



- Wash all fruits and vegetables thoroughly under running water before eating, cutting, or cooking.
- Remove damaged or bruised areas on fruits and vegetables before preparing or eating.
- Refrigerate cut, peeled, or cooked fruits and vegetables.

How is it diagnosed?

Your healthcare provider can diagnose cyclosporiasis by testing a sample of your stool. If your physician determines you may have cyclosporiasis, they will specifically request testing for *Cyclospora*, which might require multiple stool samples.¹

How is it treated?

If you develop symptoms or believe you have been exposed to *Cyclospora* infection, contact your healthcare provider.

Cyclosporiasis is treated with trimethoprim sulfamethoxazole, often sold as Bactrim or Septra. Resting and drinking plenty of fluids is also important for those experiencing diarrhea.¹

Most people with healthy immune systems will recover from cyclosporiasis without treatment. However, if not treated, you may be sick for anywhere from a few days to longer than one month. Symptoms might also relapse, seem to go away, but then return.

¹ Cyclosporiasis. (2024, September 4). Retrieved from CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/cyclosporiasis/about/index.html>

² Symptoms of Cyclosporiasis. (2024, February 26). Retrieved from CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/cyclosporiasis/signs-symptoms/index.html>

³ Preventing Cyclosporiasis. (2024, February 29). Retrieved from CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/cyclosporiasis/prevention/index.html>

⁴ Cyclospora Infection. (2026, July). Retrieved from NYS DOH: https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/cyclosporiasis/fact_sheet.htm