

What is it?

Cyclosporiasis is an intestinal illness caused by the parasite *Cyclospora cayetanensis*. The parasite is too small to be seen without a microscope. It occurs rarely in Canada. The infection has been found in people who have lived or travelled in developing countries in Asia, the Caribbean, Mexico and Peru.

How is it spread?

Cyclospora is spread when people eat food or drink water that is contaminated with human feces, or swim in contaminated water. Many recent outbreaks were caused by imported fresh fruit like raspberries, or vegetables such as lettuce, which were contaminated. It is not usually passed directly from one person to another. The infection is more common during spring and summer. Cyclospora is resistant to chlorine.

What are the symptoms?

This parasite infects the upper small bowel and usually causes watery diarrhea with frequent and sometimes explosive bowel movements. Other symptoms include loss of appetite, weight loss, bloating, increased gas, stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, muscle aches, low grade fever and fatigue. Some infected people do not have any symptoms at all.

How soon after infection will symptoms begin?

The time between becoming infected and becoming sick is approximately one week.

How long will symptoms last?

If not treated, the illness may last from a few days to a month or longer. Symptoms may seem to go away and then return one or more times.

How is the infection diagnosed and treated?

A stool sample must be sent with a specific request for testing for this parasite. It is usually treated with a seven-day course of oral antibiotics (usually a sulpha derivative). Treatment is recommended due to the chance of recurring symptoms.

How can I prevent becoming infected?

- Wash hands after using the toilet and before handling food.
- Wash all fruits and vegetables before eating or peeling.
- When travelling, avoid water, food and recreational waters that may be contaminated.

Other Questions?

Talk to your health care provider or call our Communicable Disease Program at 613-966-5500 or 1-800-267-2803, ext. 349. | TTY Dial 711 (1-800-267-6511) | hpePublicHealth.ca

References

- Infectious Disease Protocol, 2009. The Ministry of Health & Long Term Care.
- Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington Public Health, Cyclospora, July 2006.
- Grey Bruce Health Unit, Cyclospora.

CD-181
2011/07/08

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