

What is *Cyclospora*?

Cyclospora is a microscopic parasite that infects the small intestine and causes cyclosporiasis. Cases occur every year, with most illnesses reported between May and August. Although *Cyclospora* was historically associated with travel to tropical and subtropical regions and imported produce, recent outbreaks have increasingly been linked to domestically grown fresh produce.^{1,2}

Did you know?

Fresh produce is the primary source of transmission of *Cyclospora*.

Symptoms

Cyclospora infections typically start showing symptoms about one week after exposure, but can range from two days to two weeks.

Common symptoms:



Watery diarrhea, sometimes explosive



Nausea



Abdominal cramping and bloating



Fatigue



Loss of appetite



Weight loss

Less common symptoms:



Low-grade fever



Vomiting

Fact: Without treatment, illness can persist for several weeks or longer, and symptoms may seem to go away and then return.⁴

How *Cyclospora* is Transmitted

Cyclospora spreads when people consume food or water contaminated with feces containing the parasite. Common routes include:



Contaminated food



Contaminated water

Did you know?

Cyclospora oocysts are shed in human feces.

Fact: *Cyclospora* oocysts (a spore-like form of the parasite) typically require 1-2 weeks in the environment to become infectious.^{3,4}

Take Action

Cyclospora control focuses on preventing contamination before it occurs, especially in fresh produce environments.

Did you know?

Cyclospora contamination often occurs before harvest.

Strengthen Supplier & Pre-Harvest Controls

- Follow Good Agricultural Practices, or GAPs
 - Monitor agricultural water quality
 - Maintain worker health and hygiene programs
 - Provide access to portable restrooms and handwashing stations
- Help prevent contamination from human fecal sources
- Follow FSMA Produce Safety Rule requirements in the U.S. or when importing into the U.S.

Support Safe Handling in Operations

For manufacturing, retail and foodservice settings:

- Source produce from approved suppliers
- Maintain product traceability and lot-code records to support rapid recall and outbreak response
- Wash fresh produce before use, following applicable food safety guidance
- Maintain proper cleaning and sanitizing practices to help reduce cross-contamination risk

Fact: Washing produce may help reduce contamination but should not be relied on to completely eliminate *Cyclospora* risk.

Reinforce Hygiene & Cleaning Practices

- Wash hands with soap and water before and after handling or preparing raw fruits and vegetables
- Keep food-contact surfaces, utensils and equipment clean and sanitary
- Exclude ill employees from tasks that could contaminate food or food-contact surfaces

References & Further Information

1. US Food & Drug Administration (FDA). *Cyclospora* Prevention, Response and Research Action Plan. (2021, July 1)
2. US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Surveillance of Cyclosporiasis. (2026, July 1)
3. US Food & Drug Administration (FDA) Cyclosporiasis and Fresh Produce: An Overview of *Cyclospora cayetanensis* for Farmers. (2022, July)
4. US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Clinical Overview of Cyclosporiasis. (2024, March 4)

Learn more at ecolab.com/cyclospora

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