

Cyclospora

What is *cyclospora*?

Cyclospora is a parasite that causes an illness that affects the stomach and intestines. The *Cyclospora* infection is called cyclosporiasis.

How do I get *cyclospora*?

You must ingest (swallow or eat) the *Cyclospora* parasite to become infected. *Cyclospora* is usually spread through the following:

- Infection occurs by a person putting something in his/her mouth that was contaminated with infected feces (stool), such as swallowing contaminated water or food.
- People who become infected with *Cyclospora* will have the parasite in their feces, but this parasite needs time (days or weeks) after being passed in a bowel movement to become infectious; the amount of time required depends on factors such as temperature and humidity. Therefore, it is uncommon for *Cyclospora* to be passed directly from one person to another. It is not known whether or not animals can be infected and pass infection to people.
- *Cyclospora* is **NOT** spread from one person to another by coughing or sneezing, sharing drinks, hugging or kissing.

Symptoms

Symptoms begin about 7 days after ingesting the *Cyclospora* parasite. Symptoms may come and go periodically for a few weeks, some people who are infected with *Cyclospora* do not have any symptoms. Symptoms include:

- Frequent diarrhea (often watery) – can lead to severe dehydration
- Stomach cramping, bloating and gas
- Loss of appetite and weight loss
- Some people may experience low-grade fever, nausea and vomiting


Prevention

- Never drink water from lakes, streams, etc. unless you have boiled (for one minute) or filtered it first – the parasite is very small and not all filters will remove the parasite from the water. The filter label will tell you if it can remove *Cyclospora*.
- Avoiding water or food that may be contaminated with stool may help prevent *Cyclospora* infection.
- Wash your hands after using the restroom and before preparing food or handling baby toys. You may have and spread the parasite even if you do not have any symptoms.
- Always wash your hands and the child's hands after diapering or helping with toilet training.

Treatment for *cyclospora*

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 (relapse).

(continued on back)



Hand washing steps:

1. Use soap and warm running water.
2. Scrub hands for at least 20 seconds; use a nail brush.
3. Wash all surfaces:
 - Between fingers
 - Under fingernails
 - Back of hands
 - Wrists
4. Rinse well and dry hands with a clean paper towel.

Cyclospora (continued)

If you think you have *Cyclospora*

- See your health care provider immediately.
- If your job involves handling food, caring for small children, or if you work in health care, do not go to work and contact your health care provider.
- Children who might have cyclospora should not go to child care settings – especially if they have diarrhea.
- Do not swim in recreational water for at least 2 weeks after diarrhea stops.
- Do not prepare food for others.