



Tarrant County Public Health (TCPH) and other north central Texas public health departments are investigating an increase in cases of diarrheal illness caused by the one-celled parasite *Cyclospora cayatanensis*. Of the Cyclosporiasis (name of the infection) cases reported in Texas, the majority reported are in north central Texas.

No connection to other ongoing outbreaks has been determined. For information about the other outbreaks and the current case counts in Tarrant County, see the websites listed at the end.

What is Cyclospora?

Cyclospora cayatanensis is a parasite composed of one cell, too small to be seen without a microscope. This parasite causes an intestinal infection called cyclosporiasis.

How is Cyclospora spread?

Cyclospora is spread by people ingesting food or water contaminated with the Cyclospora organism. Imported fresh produce items have been implicated in previous outbreaks in the United States. To date, no specific food items have been implicated in the current outbreak. The time between becoming infected and becoming sick is usually about one week. Cyclosporiasis is not likely to be transmitted directly from one person to another.

Who is at risk for Cyclospora infection?

People can become infected with *Cyclospora* by consuming food or water contaminated with the parasite. People living or traveling in countries where cyclosporiasis is endemic, including certain tropical or subtropical regions of the world may be at increased risk for infection.

What are the symptoms of Cyclospora infection?

Symptoms of Cyclosporiasis include watery diarrhea, loss of appetite, weight loss, abdominal pain and cramping, bloating, gas, nausea, and fatigue. Less common are vomiting, body aches, and headache. Fever is not common with Cyclosporiasis. If you think you might be infected with cyclospora, see your health-care provider. People who have these symptoms, especially watery diarrhea that has lasted several days, should see their primary health-care provider. Ill people should be monitored for signs of dehydration.

How long can the 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 (relapse). It is also common to feel very tired.

How is Cyclospora infection diagnosed?

Diagnosis of cyclosporiasis is made by performing a special laboratory test on a stool sample for *Cyclospora*. Your health-care provider will ask you to submit stool specimens to see if you are infected. You might be asked to submit more than one specimen from different days. Identification of this parasite in stool requires special laboratory tests that are not routinely done. Therefore, if indicated, your health-care provider should specifically request testing for Cyclospora. In addition, your health-care provider might have your stool checked for other organisms that can cause similar symptoms.

How is Cyclospora infection treated?

Cyclosporiasis can be treated with antibiotics. Most people who have healthy immune systems will recover without treatment. If not treated with antibiotics, the illness can persist for several weeks and manifest with waxing and waning symptoms.

How is Cyclospora infection prevented?

Avoiding food or water that might have been contaminated with stool may help prevent Cyclospora infection. Although the risk may not be eliminated entirely, TCPH recommends people thoroughly wash all fresh fruits and vegetables before consumption. People who have previously been infected with Cyclospora can become infected again.

For further information concerning Cyclosporiasis, see the U.S. Centers For Disease Control's website: <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/cyclosporiasis/>.

For more information, call 817-321-4700 or visit the Tarrant County Public Health website: <http://health.tarrantcounty.com>.