Guilford County Department of Public Health

Cyclosporiasis

What is cyclosporiasis?
Cyclosporiasis is an illness caused by infection with the parasite *Cyclospora cayetanensis*. In the past, cyclosporiasis infection was generally found in people who lived or traveled in developing countries. Infections are now found worldwide.

How is it spread?
Cyclosporiasis is transmitted through contaminated food or water. Transmission occurs by drinking or swimming in water contaminated by stool or eating contaminated fresh fruits or vegetables without washing them with clean, drinkable water. *Cyclospora* parasites require days or weeks outside a host to become infectious. Illness usually begins about one week after exposure to *Cyclospora*.

What are the symptoms?
Cyclospora infects the small intestine and usually causes watery diarrhea with frequent, sometimes explosive bowel movements. Other symptoms can include loss of appetite, substantial weight loss, bloating, increased gas, stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, muscle aches, low-grade fever and fatigue.

How is it diagnosed?
Health care providers should consider a diagnosis of cyclosporiasis in persons with prolonged diarrheal illness and request stool samples so that specific tests for the parasites can be done. Health care providers may check for other parasites that could cause similar symptoms.

If not treated, the illness may last from a few days to a month or longer. Symptoms may come and go several times.

How is it treated?
The recommended treatment for infection with *Cyclospora* is a combination of two antibiotics, trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole. People who cannot take sulfa drugs will need to discuss other treatment options with their health care providers. People with diarrhea should rest and drink plenty of fluids.

How is it prevented?
Disease prevention measures should include:

- Avoid water that may be contaminated with stool (streams, ponds, lakes, etc.).
- Thoroughly wash any produce (fruits or vegetables) that come from developing countries with running, drinkable water.
- Thoroughly cook raw food from animal sources, such as beef, pork or poultry.
- Keep uncooked meats separate from cooked or ready-to-eat foods.
- Wash hands, utensils and cutting boards after handling uncooked foods.

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How does it affect my family?
People of all ages are at risk for infection. Family members who prepare food should follow general food safety guidelines to avoid cyclosporiasis as well as other food-borne illnesses. Care should also be taken to drink, cook with or swim in clean, uncontaminated water.

For more information call the Guilford County Department of Public Health at 641-7777, visit our website at www.guilfordhealth.org or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov