

FactSheet

Para Su Información

Cyclospora

What is Cyclospora?

Cyclospora (*Cyclospora cayetanensis*) is a parasite that is composed of only one cell. It is too small to be seen with the naked eye (only 8-10 microns in diameter). It used to be called by such names as Cyanobacterium-like, Coccidia-like, and Cyclospora-like bodies (CLBs).

The first known cases of Cyclospora infection were diagnosed in 1977 (reported in the medical literature in 1979). Cases have been reported with increased frequency since the mid-1980s, partly because of the increased availability to detect the parasite in stool samples. However, many questions remain about this tiny organism.

How is Cyclospora transmitted?

Cyclospora is transmitted by a person putting something in his/her mouth that was contaminated with infected stool. The parasite can be transmitted by swallowing contaminated water or food.

Who is at risk for infection?

People of all ages are at risk for infection. Travelers to tropical countries may be at increased risk. Some evidence suggests that outbreaks are most common in spring and summer.

What are the symptoms of infection?

Cyclospora infects the small intestine and typically causes an illness characterized by watery diarrhea, with an average of 6 to 7 stools per day. Other symptoms can include loss of appetite, bloating, low-grade fever, increased flatus (gas), stomach cramps, vomiting, tiredness, muscle aches, and weight loss. Other infectious organisms can cause illness that is

very similar to that caused by Cyclospora. Some persons infected with Cyclospora do not develop any symptoms.

How soon after infection do symptoms appear?

Symptoms appear several days to a week after exposure (average 7 days).

What is the treatment for Cyclospora?

If not treated, the illness may last for a few days to a month or longer and may come back one or more times. Treatment with an antibiotic may shorten the course of the illness. Infected persons with diarrhea should rest and drink plenty of fluids.

What should you do if you think you may be infected?

If you think you may be infected with Cyclospora, you should consult your physician. Identification of this parasite in stool requires special kinds of laboratory techniques that are not routinely used. Therefore, your physician should specifically request testing for this parasite. More than one stool sample may need to be checked to find the organism. Your physician may also want to check your stool for other infectious organisms that cause similar symptoms.

How do I avoid getting Cyclospora?

Avoiding water and food that may be contaminated with stool probably is the best way to prevent infection. Infected persons should wash their hands often to prevent the spread of infection. People who have previously been infected with Cyclospora can become infected again.

(continued)

Where can I get more information?

Contact your doctor or the Southern Nevada Health District, Office of Epidemiology at (702) 759-1300.



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