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# Fact Sheet

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## FOOD SAFETY FACTS ON *CYCLOSPORA*

### What is foodborne illness?

Foodborne illness occurs when a person consumes food contaminated with pathogenic bacteria, viruses or parasites. This condition is often called “food poisoning”. Many cases of foodborne illness go unreported because their symptoms often resemble flu symptoms. The most common symptoms of foodborne illness may include stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and fever.

### What are *Cyclospora cayetanensis* (*Cyclospora*) and cyclosporiasis?

- *Cyclospora* is a microscopic parasite that infects the small intestine of humans with a disease that is called cyclosporiasis.

### What are the symptoms?

- Symptoms may include watery and sometimes explosive diarrhea, loss of appetite, weight loss, nausea, gas, stomach cramps, muscle ache, vomiting, low-grade fever, bloating and fatigue.
- People usually experience *Cyclospora* symptoms about 1 week after they have been infected, but people can be infected and have no symptoms.
- If untreated, symptoms last from a few days to several weeks. However, *Cyclospora* responds quickly to proper antibiotic treatment and is not considered life-threatening in otherwise healthy people.

### Where could I come in contact with *Cyclospora*?

- *Cyclospora* is transmitted through food or water contaminated by human feces.
- Investigations indicate that fresh fruits and vegetables (berries, basil and mesclun lettuce) may be sources of *Cyclospora* infection.
- *Cyclospora* is not naturally found in or on fresh fruits and vegetables, or any other foods. However, it is suspected that food contamination occurs during cultivation, harvest, packaging or transportation through contact with contaminated water or workers.

### **What can I do to protect myself and my family?**

- Although washing fruits and vegetables is always recommended, washing contaminated food will not prevent *Cyclospora* infection. Baking and cooking fruits and vegetables will eliminate the risk of infection. Freezing fruits and vegetables may reduce the risk of infection.

### **What are producers and processors doing to protect consumers?**

- Individual companies and industry associations are working to develop systems that will further enhance the safety of their product.
- From the farm to the retail store, efforts are being made to reduce the risks associated with *Cyclospora* contamination throughout the food production process.

### **What are CFIA and industry doing to protect consumers?**

- Industry reduces the risks associated with *Cyclospora* by helping Canada's trading partners establish safe food handling practices.
- When a contaminated product is discovered, the responsible firm, with help from CFIA and other government agencies, traces it to detect the source, correct the problem and help prevent a recurrence.
- New research is underway to develop testing methods that will make *Cyclospora* easier to detect in foods.

For more information on foodborne illness and safe food handling practices, visit the Canadian Food Inspection Agency website at [www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca)