



Massachusetts Association of Health Boards

Board of Health Guidance Document

CYCLOSPORA: WHAT RESIDENTS SHOULD KNOW

July 15, 2026

This information is being provided for educational purposes only and is not to be construed as legal advice. For legal advice, please contact your municipal attorney.

What is Cyclospora?

Cyclospora cayetanensis is a microscopic parasite that can cause an intestinal illness called **cyclosporiasis**. People usually become infected by eating food or drinking water contaminated with the parasite.

Cyclospora illness occurs most often during the spring and summer. Public-health officials are currently investigating an increase in cases reported in several states.

What are the symptoms?

The most common symptom is frequent, watery diarrhea. Other symptoms may include:

- Loss of appetite and weight loss;
- Stomach cramps, bloating, gas, or nausea;
- Fatigue;
- Fever, vomiting, or muscle aches; and
- Symptoms that improve and then return.

Symptoms usually begin about one week after exposure and may last for weeks if untreated.

How can I reduce my risk?

Residents should continue to follow standard produce-safety practices:

- Wash your hands with soap and water before and after handling fresh produce.

- Rinse fruits and vegetables thoroughly under running water before eating, cutting, or cooking.
- Scrub firm produce, such as melons and cucumbers, with a clean produce brush.
- Remove bruised or damaged portions.
- Refrigerate cut, peeled, or cooked produce within two hours.
- Produce labeled “prewashed” does not need to be washed again at home.
- Do not use soap, bleach, detergent, or household disinfectants on food.
- Follow any product recall or food-specific warning issued by CDC, FDA, or the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

Does washing produce eliminate Cyclospora?

Not necessarily. Washing produce remains an important food-safety step, but it may not completely remove Cyclospora from contaminated fruits, vegetables, leafy greens, berries, or herbs.

The parasite may stick to or become lodged in the surface of produce. Routine chemical washes and sanitizers may also be ineffective against Cyclospora.

Washing produce can reduce foodborne risks, but it cannot guarantee that contaminated food is safe.

Should I avoid certain foods?

Some fresh herbs, berries, leafy greens, salads, and other produce have been linked to Cyclospora outbreaks in previous years. However, this does not mean that all of those foods should currently be avoided.

Unless public-health officials identify a specific contaminated product, brand, grower, or supplier, residents are not generally advised to avoid entire categories of fruits or vegetables.

What about cooking food to 158°F?

Thorough cooking would be expected to reduce the risk from parasites. However, CDC and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health do not currently identify 158°F as a specific consumer cooking standard for preventing Cyclospora infection.

Residents should therefore follow ordinary safe-cooking recommendations and any product-specific guidance issued by public-health officials rather than relying on 158°F as an established Cyclospora safety threshold.

When should I contact a healthcare provider?

Contact a healthcare provider if you have persistent or recurring watery diarrhea, particularly after eating fresh produce or traveling internationally.

Tell your provider that you are concerned about Cyclospora. Testing for Cyclospora may need to be specifically requested and may not be included in routine stool testing.

Cyclospora can be treated with prescription medication.

For current information and recalls, consult the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, CDC, and FDA.

CDC continues to recommend careful washing and handling of produce, while emphasizing that these measures reduce but do not eliminate the risk from contaminated food. See, <https://www.cdc.gov/cyclosporiasis/prevention/index.html>

Massachusetts also advises residents with symptoms to contact a healthcare provider and requires diagnosed cases to be reported to the local board of health. See, <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/cyclospora>

Prepared for public-information purposes. This fact sheet does not replace medical advice from a healthcare provider.