Middle-Brook Regional Health Commission

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Cyclosporiasis

You may have heard of the recent increase in Cyclosporiasis cases across the country. Cyclosporiasis is a gastrointestinal illness caused by the microscopic parasite *Cyclospora*. People can become infected by consuming food or water contaminated with the parasite. This illness is not usually spread directly from person to person. Case counts typically rise during spring and summer months, and CDC considers May 1-August 31 the annual cyclosporiasis season.

Symptoms of cyclosporiasis typically begin about 1 week after exposure, but can start between 2 and 14 days after being exposed. The most common symptoms include watery diarrhea, which can be frequent, along with loss of appetite, weight loss, bloating, nausea, and fatigue. Less common symptoms include low-grade fever and vomiting. Illness can be severe, but is not usually life-threatening.

While we have not seen any cases yet in our jurisdiction, we are working with the New Jersey Department of Health and federal partners to investigate any cases that are reported and monitor for any potential illness clusters. Nationally, there have been increases in cases reported, including a large multistate outbreak in four midwestern states (Michigan, Ohio, West Virginia, and Kentucky). While NJ has not experienced a substantial increase in cases, reported cases are beginning to rise steadily.

We strongly encourage the public to visit a clinician if you have prolonged or watery diarrhea, especially if it lasts more than a few days. Take steps to reduce your risk by following safe food handling practices:

- Wash hands with soap and water before and after handling or preparing raw fruits and vegetables.
- Thoroughly wash fresh produce under clean running water before eating. Be aware that chemically disinfecting or sanitizing produce might not fully eliminate *Cyclospora*. It is important to thoroughly wash produce even if it is labeled as pre-washed.
- Refrigerate cut, peeled, or cooked fruits and vegetables as soon as possible (within two hours).

For more information about cyclosporiasis, visit: cdc.gov/cyclosporiasis/index.html

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