

Ask an Expert: What You Need to Know About Cyclosporiasis

Jose Brandao

07/17/2026



As fresh produce takes center stage this summer, cyclosporiasis has gained attention as a foodborne intestinal illness linked to contaminated fruits and vegetables.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, symptoms such as nausea and diarrhea may hit, go away, and then return. Other symptoms, such as fatigue, may continue, even after the gastrointestinal symptoms have subsided.

The outbreak has raised questions about how people become infected, which foods are involved, and what consumers can do to reduce their risk. Consider this information.

- *Cyclospora cayetanensis* is the microscopic parasite that causes cyclosporiasis. People become infected by consuming contaminated food or water.
- The parasite is unlikely to spread from person to person because the parasite needs to mature outside the body to become infectious again.
- Iceberg lettuce is currently the primary suspected food linked to the current [outbreak](#). In previous outbreaks, fresh berries and other produce have also been implicated.
- Contaminated irrigation water with human fecal material is believed to be a common source of contamination. Any produce exposed to it could become affected.

Although *Cyclospora* is difficult to remove from fresh produce, consumers can reduce their risk by practicing good food safety habits:

- Maintain proper kitchen hygiene. Wash hands and food-preparation surfaces carefully before preparing food.
- Rinse fruits and vegetables thoroughly under running water. This is typically sufficient before eating, cutting, or cooking, even if the food is labeled as pre-washed. However, it is not enough to remove *Cyclospora*.
- Scrub firm fruits and vegetables, such as melons and cucumbers, before cutting to remove possible contamination on the skin.
- Commercial produce washes are generally unnecessary for most foodborne-causing organisms and are ineffective against *Cyclospora*.
- Whenever practical, cooking to 158°F (70°C) kills *Cyclospora* and many other foodborne pathogens. Cooked foods pose a lower risk than raw produce.

Fresh fruits and vegetables remain an important part of a healthy diet. Following basic food safety practices can help protect you and your family as you continue to enjoy fresh produce. To further reduce your risk, stay informed about food recalls and public health advisories.

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) has additional information, as does Penn State Extension, which has released a [Q&A on Cyclospora](#).

Contact

Jose Brandao

Utah State University Extension Food Safety Specialist

Jose.Brandao@usu.edu

More Extension Updates

- [Extension News](#)
- [Gardening](#)
- [Recipes](#)
- [Personal Finance](#)
- [Relationships](#)
- [Our Impact](#)

[Tips Sign Up](#) [Take a Course](#) [Donate to Extension](#)