

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Outbreak of Cyclosporiasis in Michigan

Coldwater, MI - The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency has been monitoring the outbreak of Cyclosporiasis in Michigan. We are seeing an increase in cases in Hillsdale and St. Joseph County, but we have no confirmation that they are related to this current outbreak. We request residents who receive a call, or message, from our agency to please return the call so that we can determine if your case is linked to the outbreak. The information requested in the phone call will be used as part of the larger investigation, so that public health may be able to determine the source and work to reduce community risk.

Cyclosporiasis is caused by infection with the parasite *Cyclospora cayatenensis*, which is spread by food or water contaminated with feces. Outbreaks have occurred in the past as a result of eating contaminated fresh produce, especially during the summer months.

Cyclosporiasis is not known to spread from person to person. Symptoms occur two to 14 days after exposure and may include:

- Frequent watery diarrhea.
- Loss of appetite and weight.
- Abdominal cramps and bloating.
- Nausea (vomiting is less common).
- Low-grade fever.

Individuals experiencing sudden onset of these symptoms are encouraged to be evaluated by their health care provider. Symptoms of cyclosporiasis can be significantly improved with antibiotic treatment. If untreated, the illness may last for a few days to a month or longer.

Providers are urged to consider cyclosporiasis among patients presenting with acute gastrointestinal illness.

Step you can take to reduce your risk include:

- Cook when you can.
- Wash all fresh produce under clean running water, even if you plan to peel it.
- Wash your hands with soap and water before and after handling or preparing food.
- Scrub firm fruits and vegetables with a clean produce brush.
- Cut off any bruised or damaged areas before preparing and eating.
- Wash with soap and water your utensils and food prep areas, including where they are stored in your refrigerator.

Take extra care with foods associated with previous Cyclosporiasis outbreaks such as:

- Lettuce/leafy greens – Buy whole heads of lettuce, remove 2-3 outer leaves, and wash under running water. Pre-washed and pre-cut bagged lettuce produces have been one of the sources of previous outbreaks. Leafy greens are safest when cooked.
- Cilantro and basil – Wash thoroughly under running water while separating the leaves. Cooking is the safest way to eat.
- Green Onions – Trim the root and remove the outer layer, wash thoroughly under running water, cooking is the safest way to serve.
- Raspberries – Because of the rough surface where the parasite can hide, which makes them difficult to wash, they are safest to eat when cooked in pies, jams and jellies.
- Snow Peas – wash under running water and rub the surface. They are safest when cooked.

The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency is committed to helping people live healthier. For more information, contact your local office, visit our website, www.bhsj.org, follow us on Facebook www.facebook.com/BHSJCHA or Instagram www.instagram.com/bhsj_healthagency.

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