

Food borne illness outbreak info sheet

July 26, 2013

Outbreak info: As of July 25, 2013, CDC has reported more than 285 cases of *Cyclospora* infections in a number of states, including 138 cases in Iowa, 70 in Nebraska, 66 in Texas, and 1 in Kansas. The case in Kansas reportedly may have been acquired outside of the state of Kansas. At least 18 people have been reported to be hospitalized in three states. These numbers may continue to rise as cases are investigated. More information is available from: www.cdc.gov/parasites/cyclosporiasis/outbreaks/investigation-2013.html

Information on organism: *Cyclospora* is a parasite which is spread by consuming food (often produce) or water contaminated with infected feces. It usually takes 1 week from the time the contaminated food is consumed until the person becomes sick. Symptoms include persistent watery diarrhea with frequent bowel movements, which can last an average of 60 days if not treated. Other common symptoms include loss of appetite, stomach cramps/pain, bloating, increased gas, fatigue, and other flu-like symptoms. *Cyclospora* can be treated with specific antibiotics. More info is available from: www.cdc.gov/parasites/cyclosporiasis/index.html

What caused outbreak: No particular food item has yet been implicated, but it is generally suspected that a fresh vegetable may be the source of the outbreak.

What to tell consumers:

- It is still safe to eat fresh vegetables, as the causative vegetables are likely no longer in commerce.
- This outbreak is a great reminder that consumers should use proper food safety handling practices when preparing and handling fresh vegetables- whether they are purchased at a grocery store, a farmers market, or you raised them yourself. These practices include:
 - o Before (and after) handling or preparing any food, be sure to thoroughly wash your hands with soap for 20 seconds
 - o Cut away any damaged or bruised parts of the produce
 - o Wash/rub down the produce under clean running water- even if you are going to peel it
 - There is no need to use soap or produce rinses, but be sure to use clean water and clean thoroughly.
 - With items such as head lettuce, be sure to take apart the leaves and wash the individual leaves.
 - o If appropriate for the fruit or vegetable (such as potatoes or melons), use a vegetable brush to scrub the outside surface under running water.
 - o Iowa State has a video on washing fresh produce: <http://youtu.be/SiQ5P1wQrRU>

- Even though no cases have been reported in Missouri and only 1 in Kansas so far, there may be some consumers in these states that have been exposed to the pathogen. Anyone that is experiencing the symptoms listed above should see their health care provider.

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