NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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Date: 30 July 2026
To: North Carolina Clinicians
From: Zack Moore, MD, MPH, State Epidemiologist
Subject: Cyclosporiasis updates

Introduction

Currently there are large outbreaks of cyclosporiasis occurring in NC and in multiple other states. Cyclosporiasis is reportable in NC and has been nationally notifiable since 1998. Reported cases of cyclosporiasis have been increasing in NC since 2020. Over 700 cases have been reported in NC to date in 2026, with 57% among residents of Wake County. While outbreaks in the Midwest have been linked to Taco Bell restaurants, this association has not been seen in North Carolina. DPH is working with state, local and federal partners to investigate cases and identify potential sources. Weekly updates regarding cases in North Carolina can be found here.

Actions for NC Clinicians

- Consider cyclosporiasis in patients presenting with prolonged or relapsing watery diarrhea, particularly during the May–August cyclosporiasis season, even without a history of international travel.
- Specifically request *Cyclospora* laboratory testing on stool specimens; routine ova and parasite (O&P) examinations might not reliably detect the parasite. Consider molecular (PCR-based) diagnostic testing where available, because it can improve detection over O&P examination.
- Treat confirmed cases of cyclosporiasis with 7-10 days of trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole (TMP-SMX) for immunocompetent adults and children over age 2 months.
- Remember to consider the possibility of other enteric pathogens and testing options available at the NCSLPH.
- See here for more information from CDC.

Recommendations for Patients

Patients should be advised to:

- Visit a clinician if they have prolonged or watery diarrhea, especially if it lasts more than a few days.
- Reduce their risk by thoroughly washing fresh produce under clean running water before eating and by following safe food handling practices. It is important to note that rinsing and washing may reduce the amount of cyclospora present in contaminated produce but it is unlikely to remove it entirely. Patients should also consider reducing use of uncooked ingredients that have been more frequently reported by cyclospora cases in North Carolina, like parsley and cilantro, or using locally grown produce.

Additional Information on Cyclospora

Cyclosporiasis is a gastrointestinal illness caused by the parasite *Cyclospora cayatenensis*. People become infected by consuming food or water contaminated with the parasite. The incubation period is generally seven days, and common symptoms include watery diarrhea, loss of appetite, weight loss, bloating, nausea and fatigue.

In contrast to other some other foodborne infections, Cyclospora are not infectious when passed in stool. They require at least one week under favorable environmental conditions to sporulate and become infections, thus person to person transmission is unlikely. Humans are the only known host for *Cyclospora cayatenensis.* Historically, transmission to people is associated with consumption of contaminated fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs.