

FACT SHEET

Cyclospora cayetanensis

Common clinical features

Watery diarrhoea, loss of weight, loss of appetite, bloating, nausea, vomiting, muscle aches and persistent fatigue. Illness may last from a week to a month or longer if untreated.

Incubation period

1 – 11 days, on average one week.

Where is it found?

The gastrointestinal tract of humans, no known animal reservoir. Once excreted the oocysts sporulate in the environment before becoming infectious and this process occurs over several days to weeks.

How is it acquired by affected individuals?

From drinking or swimming in contaminated water and eating contaminated food, particularly fresh produce such as salad vegetables and fruit. Direct person to person spread (faecal oral) is unlikely as the oocysts are not infectious when first excreted in faeces. Although infection may be acquired worldwide, it is more common in developing countries and travellers are at increased risk.

How does the laboratory confirm the diagnosis?

Oocysts are detected in faeces samples examined by microscopy. Results are usually available within 2 days of receipt in the laboratory.

How is it treated?

One of the few gastrointestinal infections for which there is a specific antibiotic treatment, Trimethoprim/Sulfamethoxazole.