



PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY TO RESTAURANTS AND FOOD SERVICE ESTABLISHMENTS

July 17, 2026

Cyclosporiasis Prevention and Response

The Mississippi State Department of Health is advising restaurants and food service establishments to remain alert for cyclosporiasis, an intestinal illness caused by the parasite *Cyclospora cayetanensis*. Illness is most often associated with consuming contaminated fresh produce or herbs.

Symptoms may include prolonged or recurring watery diarrhea, loss of appetite, stomach cramps, bloating, nausea, fatigue, and weight loss. Symptoms typically begin about one week after exposure but may begin earlier or later.

Restaurants and food service establishments should take the following precautions:

Employee illness

Employees experiencing diarrhea or vomiting should immediately notify management and should not prepare, handle, or serve food while ill. Establishments should follow all applicable employee health exclusion and reporting requirements.

Employees with prolonged or recurring diarrhea should be encouraged to seek medical evaluation and inform their healthcare provider about their work in food service.

Produce handling

Wash fresh fruits, vegetables, and herbs thoroughly under clean running water before preparation or service, including produce that will be peeled or cut.

Remove damaged or bruised areas and discard produce that appears spoiled.

Clean and sanitize cutting boards, utensils, preparation surfaces, sinks, and equipment used to handle fresh produce.

Prevent cross-contamination between raw produce, raw animal products, and ready-to-eat foods.

Maintain proper refrigeration and store produce away from potential contamination.

Washing produce may reduce contamination but may not completely eliminate *Cyclospora*. Approved sourcing and proper handling remain essential.

Purchasing and recordkeeping

Purchase produce only from approved and reputable suppliers.

Maintain invoices, supplier records, product descriptions, lot numbers, delivery dates, and distribution information for fresh produce and herbs.

Restaurants should be prepared to provide these records promptly if requested during a public health investigation.

Response to suspected illness or an investigation

Immediately notify the local health department if multiple employees or customers report similar gastrointestinal illness.

Preserve relevant menus, recipes, invoices, supplier records, employee schedules, reservation information, and food-preparation records.

Do not discard suspected food products or packaging unless directed by public health or regulatory officials.

Cooperate with interviews, inspections, traceback activities, and product-removal instructions.

Follow all recall, hold, embargo, or disposal instructions issued by public health or food regulatory agencies.

Cyclosporiasis is generally not spread directly from one person to another. Public health investigations focus primarily on identifying contaminated food or water sources and preventing additional exposures.

Restaurants play an important role in protecting the public by enforcing employee illness policies, maintaining accurate purchasing records, following safe produce-handling practices, and responding quickly when illness is reported.

- Questions or reports of suspected illness should be directed to:

MSDH Office of Epidemiology

Phone: Monday – Friday, 8am – 5pm: 601-576-7725

Reporting Hotline: 1-800-556-0003

After-hours Number: 601-576-7400

Email: Epidemiology.Office@msdh.ms.gov

Website: msdh.ms.gov

- Questions regarding restaurants or any other food service facility may be sent to food@msdh.ms.gov