

Cyclospora: Guidance for food establishments

Verify that your food is coming from an approved source:

- **Approved source:** Only purchase produce from reputable and inspected vendors.
- **Shift to Whole Produce:** Avoid pre-cut bagged salad mixes during active outbreak periods. Buy whole heads of lettuce so kitchen staff can clean the product on their own. Remove the outer layer entirely.
- **Track Traceability:** Keep all invoices and receipts of where food is purchased so if needed, a food item can be traced back to its original source.
- **Highest risk produce:** Avoid leafy greens, fresh herbs like basil and cilantro, berries, and snow peas, amongst others.

Practice safe food handling:

- **Thorough Washing:** Rinse all fresh fruits and vegetables thoroughly, several times, under cold, clean running water. For firm-skinned produce like melons, cucumbers, or squash, scrub them firmly with a clean, dedicated produce brush.
- **Cut and Discard imperfections and bruises:** Use a clean knife to cut away and discard any damaged or bruised areas of produce before preparing or serving, as these pockets can harbor Cyclospora.
- **Trim and Strip High-Risk Items:** For green onions, cut off the root ends and completely peel away the outer layer. For herbs like cilantro and basil, separate the leaves entirely before washing.
- **Cook When Possible:** The only definitive way to completely destroy Cyclospora on food is heat. When practical, cook vegetables and herbs to an internal temperature of at minimum **165°F**.

Time and Temperature Storage Rules:

- **Food preparation:** Avoid leaving foods out of refrigeration as much as possible. When prepping food, prep in small portions so that the food can be placed back into the refrigerator as soon as possible. **Never use/consume foods that have been out of the refrigerator for more than 4 hours. You must discard the food.**
- **Strict Holding Temperatures:** Maintain raw, cut produce at a cold holding temperature of **41°F (4°C) or lower** to prevent the growth of pathogens. Conduct daily temperature checks to make sure all equipment is holding temperature properly.

Kitchen Sanitation Countermeasures:

- **Cleaning vs Sanitizing:** Standard chemical sanitizers such as bleach and quaternary ammonia do not kill Cyclospora. Make sure to scrub areas with detergent and rinse before applying sanitizer.
- **Food Contact Deep Cleaning:** Thoroughly wash and sanitize walk-in refrigerators, display cases, prep tables, and cutting boards that come into contact with raw produce.



BRISTOL-BURLINGTON HEALTH DISTRICT
240 Stafford Avenue, Bristol, Connecticut 06010-4617
Tel. (860) 584-7682 • Fax (860) 584-3814 • www.bbhd.org



- **Prevent Cross-Contamination:** Keep ready-to-eat foods completely isolated from raw, unwashed produce. Ensure staff use separate, color-coded cutting boards and clean utensils for different tasks.

Employee Hygiene Protocols:

- **Soap and Water Only:** Staff must wash hands vigorously with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling any raw fruits or vegetables, just as they would for any raw meats. **Alcohol-based hand sanitizers do not kill or remove Cyclospora and are never a substitute to hand washing.**
- **Symptom Exclusions:** If a staff member is showing any signs of a gastrointestinal illness such as diarrhea, stomach cramps, vomiting and unusual fatigue, exclude them from work immediately. Management must notify their Local Health Agency as well.
 - The Local Health Agency will contact the employee and inform management of any next steps.
 - If the employee is diagnosed with a reportable disease, the Local Health Agency must clear the staff before coming back to work
 - Due to the current outbreak, being checked out by a medical professional and receiving a doctor's note is highly encouraged

Your local Health Department is here to help:

- Any questions, comments, or concerns regarding food safety can be directed to your local Health Department Environmental Health Department.
- Any questions, comments, or concerns regarding Cyclospora can be directed to your local Health Departments Public Health Nurse.
- Always reach out to your provider if you are concerned about your health.

While this guidance document was developed in response to the Cyclospora outbreak to assist food establishments, including restaurants, grocery stores, food trucks, and other food service operations, in reducing the risk of cross-contamination and foodborne illness associated with Cyclospora, many of the practices described represent established food safety requirements. These requirements, **highlighted in red**, are not specific to the outbreak and must be followed at all times to ensure compliance with applicable food safety regulations and to protect public health.