

Cyclospora and Fresh Produce Safety

Public health agencies are investigating an increase in cyclosporiasis cases. The source of the illnesses has not been identified.

Cyclospora is a microscopic parasite that can cause intestinal illness when contaminated food or water is consumed. Previous outbreaks have been associated with different types of fresh produce.

This notice is being shared as a general food-safety reminder for students, faculty, and staff. It does not identify any campus location, store, supplier, brand, or product as contaminated.

Reduce Your Risk

When handling fresh produce:

- Wash your hands using soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food.
- Rinse fruits and vegetables thoroughly under clean running water before eating, cutting, peeling, or cooking them.
- Rinse produce even when it is labeled as pre-washed.
- Scrub firm produce, such as melons and cucumbers, with a clean produce brush.
- Remove bruised or damaged areas and discard spoiled produce.
- Remove the outer layers of leafy vegetables when practical.
- Keep produce separate from raw meat, poultry, and seafood.
- Clean cutting boards, utensils, and countertops before and after use.
- Refrigerate cut or peeled produce within two hours.

Important Information

Washing produce is still recommended and may reduce exposure, but it may not completely remove Cyclospora—even from commercially washed or pre-washed produce. Do not use soap, bleach, disinfectants, or household cleaning products on produce. When practical, cooking produce to at least 158°F (70 °C) is the most reliable way to eliminate the parasite.

Common Symptoms

The most common symptoms are frequent or watery diarrhea. Other symptoms may include:

- Stomach cramps, bloating, or increased gas
- Loss of appetite or unintended weight loss
- Nausea or fatigue
- Headache, body aches, vomiting, or low-grade fever

Symptoms may occur within two days and last for two weeks or more, with the possibility of relapsed symptoms if left untreated. Anyone experiencing prolonged or severe diarrhea should contact their healthcare provider. Continue to follow official public health advisories and food recall notices.