



Multistate Outbreak of *Cyclospora* Illnesses linked to Imported Fresh Basil

Posted: July 26, 2019

Outbreak Status: Ongoing

The New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) is working with the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), several states and public health and regulatory on a multistate outbreak of cyclosporiasis infections. In New Jersey, the overall number of cyclosporiasis cases reported to date from May 2019 is markedly higher than the number of cases reported for the same period in 2017 and 2018.

- Cyclosporiasis is an illness caused by the ingestion of food or water contaminated with the parasite *Cyclospora cayetanensis*.
- Symptoms of *Cyclospora* infection include frequent loose stools, loss of appetite, weight loss, bloating, stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, muscle aches, low-grade fever and fatigue
- If left untreated, symptoms of cyclosporiasis can last from a few days to over a month and may return several times after the illness initially resolves and follow a remitting-relapsing course.
- Although cyclosporiasis usually is not life threatening, reported complications have included malabsorption, cholecystitis, and reactive arthritis (previously sometimes called Reiter's Syndrome). Untreated illness may last for a few days to a month but can sometimes be longer.
- In the United States, most reported cases have occurred during the months of May through August, peaking in June and July.

Domestically acquired cyclosporiasis cases are not associated with travel to a country that is considered endemic for cyclosporiasis. National case counts can be found on the CDC website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/cyclosporiasis/outbreaks/index.html>.

As of July 25, 2019; NJ has 69 laboratory confirmed cases of cyclosporiasis reported to NJDOH by 14 counties in people who became ill since May 1, 2019 and who had no history of international travel during the 14-day period before illness onset. The median illness onset date is 6/21/19 (range: 5/21/19 - 7/6/19), 46/68, (66%) are female, at least 4 people were hospitalized, and no deaths have been reported. Cases associated with this outbreak are from; Atlantic (2), Bergen (3), Burlington (4), Camden (1), Hunterdon (2), Mercer (3), Middlesex (8), Monmouth (4), Morris (5), Ocean (2), Passaic (1), Somerset (12), Sussex (1), Union (20) and Warren (1).

CDC's analysis of epidemiologic information indicates that contaminated fresh basil is the likely cause of the illnesses. New Jersey is seeing a similar signal for basil, but we are still working with CDC and FDA on traceback efforts. FDA's traceback investigation indicates that the fresh basil was exported to the United States by Siga Logistics de RL de CV located in Morelos, Mexico and FDA is working with the firm to facilitate a recall.

Advice for Consumers:

- Do not buy, eat, or serve any fresh basil exported by Siga Logistics de RL de CV located in Morelos, Mexico.
- Do not consume or serve uncooked items like pesto or salad, that may include fresh basil from Mexico.



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- If consumers cannot determine if the basil is from this company, they should avoid basil from Mexico. If they do not know what country the basil is from, they should avoid it.

Advice for Restaurants, Retailers, Distributors, Importers and Suppliers:

- The FDA strongly advises importers, suppliers, and distributors, as well as restaurants, retailers, and other food service providers to not sell, serve or distribute fresh basil exported by Siga Logistics de RL de CV located in Morelos, Mexico.
- Do not sell, serve or distribute the fresh imported basil if source is unknown.

Additional Resources:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/cyclosporiasis/index.html> (CDC Cyclosporiasis Homepage)
- <https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/cyclosporiasis/outbreaks/index.html> (CDC Outbreak Info)
- <https://www.fda.gov/food/outbreaks-foodborne-illness/outbreak-investigation-cyclospora-illnesses-linked-imported-fresh-basil-july-2019> (FDA)
- <https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/cyclo.shtml> (NJDOH Cyclosporiasis Homepage)
- <https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/foodborne.shtml> (NJDOH Foodborne Illness Homepage)