

HALTON REGION HEALTH DEPARTMENT  
OFFICE OF THE ASSOCIATE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH  
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TO: Halton Physicians  
Medical Chiefs of Staff: Joseph Brant Hospital, Halton Healthcare (Oakville, Milton and Georgetown Hospitals)  
Chairs of: Family Practice, Paediatrics, Internal Medicine, Emergency, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Surgery  
Chief of Laboratory Services and Infection Control Practitioners

POST IN: Emergency Department and Physicians Lounge

FROM: Dr. Daniela Kempkens, Associate Medical Officer of Health

DATE: July 24, 2018

**RE: Cyclosporiasis in Ontario**

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The Halton Region Health Department has been notified by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) that Ontario is experiencing a large outbreak of *Cyclospora* infection. As requested by the MOHLTC we are informing you that as of July 12, 2018, there were 36 locally-acquired cyclosporiasis cases reported in Ontario since April 1, 2018. In Halton for the same time period, only one of the four cyclosporiasis reported cases had no out of Canada travel history during the entire incubation period.

[Cyclosporiasis](#) is a gastrointestinal illness caused by infection with the parasite *Cyclospora cayetanensis*. It is commonly characterized by frequent watery diarrhea, as well as other symptoms such as anorexia, fatigue, abdominal cramps, nausea, and myalgia. Left untreated, symptoms typically last 6 to 7 weeks and can wax and wane in intensity. Symptoms typically improve within 2 to 3 days of starting the first-line treatment for cyclosporiasis.

People are infected by ingesting food or water infected with the parasite. As *Cyclospora* is not endemic in Canada, most reported cases in Ontario are infected when visiting an endemic country (e.g., countries in the Caribbean, South and Central America, South and South East Asia). However, when cases occur in individuals who did not travel, an investigation is launched. Most outbreaks in Ontario occur in the spring and summer and locally-acquired infections are likely due to fresh produce such as berries or herbs that are imported from *Cyclospora* endemic countries. The infection is unlikely to spread from person to person.

The purpose of this communication is to provide information about cyclosporiasis to support prompt diagnosis and treatment of infected patients, as well as assist with identifying the source of illness.

- **Diagnosis:** *Cyclospora* infection can be diagnosed by a stool ova and parasite (O&P) examination.

If patients present with cyclosporiasis-compatible symptoms between now and the end of summer, please request a stool O&P on the lab requisition. It may be helpful on the lab requisition to also specify the request to rule out *Cyclospora*.

- **Treatment:** First-line treatment of laboratory-confirmed *Cyclospora* is trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole (TMP-SMX).

For more information on cyclosporiasis in Ontario and links to testing information, please visit [PHO website](#).

Please report all suspected or confirmed cases of [Diseases of Public Health Significance](#) (formerly Reportable Diseases) to the Halton Region Health Department as soon as possible. Diseases marked \* should be reported immediately by telephone (24 hours a day, 7 days a week) or fax (Mon-Fri, 8:30 am – 4:30 pm only). Other diseases can be reported the next working day. Dial 311, 905-825-6000 or toll free at 1-866-442-5866. For general information, please visit [halton.ca/physicians](http://halton.ca/physicians). To sign up for important updates by email, visit [halton.ca/physicianupdates](http://halton.ca/physicianupdates).

**If any link provided in this memo does not work, please cut and paste it into your web browser.**