



For Immediate Release

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**Saint Louis County Encourages Preventative Care During
Cyclosporiasis Outbreak**

SAINT LOUIS, MO (July 18, 2018) – Starting at the end of May to the present, there have been 22 cases of cyclosporiasis confirmed in Saint Louis County, with the majority of cases originating in West/Southwest County (Ballwin/Chesterfield/Fenton). Thus far, all cases have been found in adults, ranging in age from 21 to 80 years old. The unusual number of cases has initiated an investigation into the rash of illnesses and while no definite origin has been confirmed, many of the cases report eating lettuce, tomatoes, and cilantro. Additionally, there have been 13 cases who report eating premade salads, and several more cases are still in the process of being interviewed.

Cyclosporiasis is an intestinal illness caused by the microscopic parasite *Cyclospora cayetanensis*. Usually, people become infected with *Cyclospora* when they consume food or water contaminated with feces that contains the parasite. The most common symptoms for cyclosporiasis include watery diarrhea, frequent and sometimes explosive bowel movements. Other common symptoms are loss of appetite, weight loss, stomach cramps/pain, bloating, increased gas, nausea, and fatigue.

“There are simple steps people can take to prevent the transmission of cyclosporiasis, and as we see a rise in case numbers, it is vital that community members become more vigilant in following these precautions,” said Dr. Fredrick Echols, Saint Louis County Department of Public Health’s director of communicable disease control services.

To prevent transmission, Saint Louis County Department of Public Health recommends the following:

- Wash hands with soap and warm water before and after handling or preparing fruits and vegetables. Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and counter tops with soap and hot water between the preparation of raw meat, poultry, and seafood products and the preparation of fruits and vegetables that will not be cooked.
- Wash all fruits and vegetables thoroughly under running water before eating, cutting, or cooking. Fruits and vegetables that are labeled “prewashed” do not need to be washed again at home. Scrub firm fruits and vegetables, such as melons and cucumbers, with a clean produce brush. Cut away any damaged or bruised areas on fruits and vegetables before preparing and eating.

- Refrigerate cut, peeled, or cooked fruits and vegetables as soon as possible, or within 2 hours. Store fruits and vegetables away from raw meat, poultry, and seafood.
- Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently if you are in close contact with an individual who has a confirmed *Cyclospora* infection.

If you believe you may have cyclosporiasis, contact your medical provider immediately.

For more information on cyclosporiasis, visit: www.cdc.gov/parasites/cyclosporiasis/index.html

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