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MEDCHI URGES MARYLAND RESIDENTS TO BE ALERT AS CYCLOSPORA CASES RISE ACROSS THE REGION

BALTIMORE – July 17, 2026 – MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society, is urging Maryland residents to take precautions following a significant increase in reported cases of cyclosporiasis, a foodborne illness caused by the parasite *Cyclospora cayetanensis*. As the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) investigates a multi-state outbreak, confirmed cases in Maryland and Virginia highlight the potential for additional illnesses throughout the region.

Cyclospora is a microscopic parasite that spreads when food or water becomes contaminated with human feces. Fresh produce—including leafy greens, herbs, berries, and other fruits and vegetables—is most commonly associated with outbreaks because these foods are often consumed raw. While thoroughly washing produce can help reduce the risk of illness, it cannot completely eliminate the parasite.

“Fresh fruits and vegetables remain an essential part of a healthy diet, but consumers should also be aware of foodborne illnesses that can occasionally accompany fresh produce,” said Eric Wargotz, MD, FCAP, President of MedChi “Anyone experiencing persistent gastrointestinal symptoms, particularly prolonged watery diarrhea, should seek medical evaluation promptly. Early diagnosis and treatment can help prevent serious complications.”

Symptoms of cyclosporiasis typically develop two to 14 days after exposure and may include:

- Frequent watery diarrhea
- Abdominal cramping and bloating
- Excessive gas
- Nausea
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Weight loss

Unlike many common stomach viruses that resolve within a day or two, untreated cyclosporiasis can persist for several weeks or even longer, with symptoms that may improve and then return. Severe diarrhea can lead to dehydration, particularly among young children, older adults, and individuals with weakened immune systems.

MedChi also encourages healthcare professionals to consider Cyclospora infection in patients presenting with prolonged diarrheal illness during the summer months. Because routine stool cultures do not typically detect the parasite, clinicians may need to order specialized diagnostic testing, including molecular PCR testing or modified acid-fast staining, when clinically appropriate. Once diagnosed, cyclosporiasis is generally treated successfully with an appropriate antibiotic regimen prescribed by a healthcare professional.

“Rapid recognition by both patients and healthcare providers is essential,” Wargotz added. “Prompt diagnosis not only helps patients recover more quickly but also supports public health officials in identifying outbreaks and protecting our communities.”

The CDC and state public health agencies continue investigating the source of the current increase in cases. MedChi encourages Maryland residents to remain informed, practice safe food handling, wash fresh produce thoroughly, stay hydrated if symptoms develop, and seek medical care if diarrhea is severe, prolonged, or accompanied by signs of dehydration. For more information about foodborne illnesses and cyclosporiasis, visit the CDC's website or consult your physician.

About MedChi

MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society, is a non-profit membership association of Maryland physicians. Formed in 1799, it is still the largest physician organization in Maryland today. The mission of MedChi is to serve as Maryland's foremost advocate and resource for physicians, their patients, and the public health of Maryland. For more information, please visit www.medchi.org.