

Cyclosporiasis outbreak under investigation nationwide (Broadcast)

INTRO:

A SURGE IN PARASITE-LINKED ILLNESSES HAS HEALTH OFFICIALS ACROSS THE UNITED STATES ON ALERT.

CYCLOSPORIASIS – CAUSED BY THE PARASITE CYCLOSPORA – HAS MADE HEADLINES THIS SUMMER... AS INVESTIGATORS WORK TO IDENTIFY ITS SOURCE.

TAKE VO

IT'S A MICROSCOPIC PARASITE... CAUSING AN INFECTION IN THE SMALL INTESTINE AND PRODUCING EXPLOSIVE DIARHEA... AMONG OTHER SYMPTOMS.

THOUSANDS OF CASES HAVE BEEN REPORTED SO FAR... WITH THE OUTBREAK REACHING 34 STATES ACCORDING TO THE C-D-C.

MICHIGAN HAS REPORTED THE MOST CASES SO FAR – WITH HEALTH OFFICIALS THERE IDENTIFYING LETTUCE AS A POSSIBLE SOURCE. DR. SHARJEEL AHMAD... AN INFECTIOUS DISEASE DOCTOR WITH OSF HEALTHCARE... SAYS THE OUTBREAKS START AT THE FARM... SPREADING FROM FECAL MATTER THAT CONTAMINATES THE SOIL AND WATER. THEN IT INFECTS THE FOOD BEING GROWN THERE.

TAKE SOT | DR. SHARJEEL AHMAD | STAFF PHYSICIAN OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE | OSF HEALTHCARE

"When the running water for irrigation gets contaminated, then the soil gets contaminated while you're growing raw produce," Dr. Ahmad adds. "It's meant to be consumed raw, but things like berries and lettuce have a big surface area with crinkles, cracks and crevices."

VO TAG

CONTAMINATION CAN ALSO OCCUR DURING HARVESTING IF WORKERS DON'T PROPERLY WASH THEIR HANDS AFTER USING THE RESTROOM. DR. AHMAD RECOMMENDS WASHING EACH INDIVIDUAL PIECE OF LETTUCE AND BERRIES... ALTHOUGH WASHING THEM WON'T FULLY KILL THE PARASITE. THE ONLY WAY TO KILL CYCLOSPORA IS BY COOKING THE FOOD TO 158 DEGREES FAHRENHEIT OR HOTTER. DR. AHMAD SAYS PEOPLE WITH WEAKENED IMMUNE SYSTEMS... OR THOSE WHO ARE PREGNANT... NEED TO BE EXTRA CAUTIOUS... ESPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO LEAFY GREENS... MELONS AND BERRIES.