



AMEBIASIS

What is amebiasis?

Amebiasis is an intestinal illness caused by a one-celled parasite called *Entamoeba histolytica*. Affecting only humans, it occurs most often where living settings are crowded and sanitary conditions are poor. It is very common in parts of the developing world, including Africa, Latin America, India, and Southeast Asia. In the United States, amebiasis is most often found in travelers to and immigrants from these areas.

What are the symptoms?

Most people with this infection do not have symptoms. In fact, some people with amebiasis may carry the parasite for weeks or years, often without symptoms. If symptoms occur, they may be seen a few days to several months after exposure to the parasite. Symptoms may be watery diarrhea, abdominal cramping, nausea and loss of appetite. Fever and bloody stools are less common.

How do you get it? How is it spread?

Anyone can get the disease. The parasite is spread through food or water contaminated with infected stools. It can also be spread when fingers or objects (toys, pencils) contaminated with stool of an infected person, are put into a person's mouth. Surfaces, such as tables, faucets and door knobs may also be sources of infection.

What is its treatment?

There are several antibiotics available to treat amebiasis. More than one medication may be needed to completely clear the parasite from the intestines.

How can it be prevented?

The risk of spreading infection reduced with proper treatment and good personal hygiene.

- Wash your hands with soap and water –
 - ✓ before handling food and eating meals
 - ✓ after changing diapers
 - ✓ after using bathroom
- Put soiled diapers in a container with a lid. Make sure that you wash your hands and the hands of the infant or toddler.
- Clean toys and other surfaces that have the possibility of being contaminated such as bathroom fixtures, doorknobs, and changing tables. Use cleaning wipes or diluted bleach solution (1/4 cup to 1-gallon water). Make new homemade bleach solution daily.
- Do not use ice or drink water while traveling in countries where here the water supply may not be safe.
- Do not eat uncooked food when traveling in countries without safe water treatment and sanitation systems.
- Always- rinse all vegetables and fruits with fresh (uncontaminated) water.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

SCPH Communicable Disease Unit 330-375-2662
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov)