



Amebiasis

What is it?

It is a parasitic infection caused by the protozoa (single-celled organisms), *Entamoeba histolytica*. The infection only affects humans and is excreted through the feces (poop) of infected people.

What are the symptoms?

- Most people who become infected have no symptoms, but they carry the parasite, and can pass it onto others.
- 10-20 % of people who become infected have symptoms, which include diarrhea (sometimes with blood or mucus), stomach pain or cramping, and constipation.
- In rare circumstances, it can affect other parts of the body like the liver, lungs, and brain.

When do symptoms start?

People who do become sick usually develop symptoms in 2 to 4 weeks, though it can sometimes take longer.

How is it spread?

The infection can occur when a person:

- Puts anything into their mouth that has touched the feces of a person who is infected.
- Swallows something, such as food or water, that is contaminated with the parasite.
- Swallows the parasite's cysts (eggs) picked up from contaminated surfaces or fingers.

How is it treated?

Antibiotics are available for treatment. Your healthcare provider will decide the treatment that is right for you.

How is it prevented?

- Frequent and thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent infection.
- Handwash with soap and water after using the toilet, after changing diapers or cleaning feces,

before and after preparing food, and after sexual contact.

- Dispose of human feces in a clean way and do not use it as a fertilizer.
- Drink water that you know is clean and safe; when there is a concern that water may be contaminated, make water safe for drinking by boiling, chemical disinfection, or filtration (e.g., when using a well or private water source, travelling, camping, etc.)
- Wash all fruits and vegetables thoroughly with clean water prior to eating, especially if eating them raw.
- Practice safe sex (e.g., condoms, dental dams) and avoid sexual practices that cause fecal-oral transmission.
- Do not use recreational water venues (e.g., swimming pools or water parks) until treatment has been completed and diarrhea has resolved.

Should I go to childcare, school or work?

People working in the food industry, healthcare, or childcare should be excluded until 24 hours after diarrhea resolves, or 48 hours after the completion of treatment.

For further information, please contact the Communicable Disease Control (CDC) Program at 705-474-1400 or toll free at 1-800-563-2808, ext. 5229.

References:

Centre for Disease Control. (2021). Parasites – Amebiasis - *Entamoeba histolytica* infection: General Information. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/amebiasis/general-info.html>

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