

IDRS Infectious Disease Reporting System

Disease Reporting 24 Hours a Day

Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health

AMEBIASIS

Amebiasis is an intestinal illness caused by a microscopic parasite (amoeba) called *Entamoeba histolytica*. This parasite is found in the United States and around the world.

Symptoms

- Many people may have only mild abdominal discomfort or no symptoms at all
- Stomach pain or cramping
- Diarrhea (sometimes with blood or mucus)
- Fever
- The symptoms start 2-4 weeks or even months after infection.

Transmission

- People can get the parasite from hands, water, or food that has been contaminated by stool (poop).
- Cysts (eggs) from the parasite multiply in a person's intestine, and can live on objects or hands that touch stool from an infected person.
- People can become infected by swallowing cysts from the parasite.
- There may be cysts in an infected person's stool even if the person does not feel sick.

Treatment

- A doctor can diagnose amebiasis by sending a stool sample to the lab for testing.
- Amebiasis can be treated by a doctor with a prescription antibiotic.

Prevention

- *Always* wash hands thoroughly after going to the bathroom, changing a child's diaper, before preparing meals and before eating.
- Avoid touching your mouth after touching objects that might be contaminated.
- Children who attend day care centers should be kept at home if they have diarrhea.
- Food handlers, day care workers, or people who work in direct patient care who are infected should not work until after the treatment is finished and they have stool samples that show no cysts.

Additional Information

- People who travel to areas of the world which do not have a sanitary water supply are at greater risk for getting amebiasis. If you travel to these places, drink bottled water only. Eat only cooked food or fruit that you peel yourself.
- Men who have sex with men can get amebiasis through sexual contact.
- If household members or other contacts develop symptoms, they should be tested for amebiasis also.

All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.



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