

Amebiasis

FACT SHEET

What is Amebiasis?

Amebiasis is a disease caused by a parasite called *Entamoeba histolytica*. The parasite is passed in the stool of an infected person. The parasite is protected by an outer shell that allows it to survive outside the body and in the environment for long periods of time.

Who Can Get Amebiasis?

Anyone can get amebiasis, although it is found more often in:

- Travelers who visit developing countries with poor sanitary conditions.
- Immigrants from a country with poor sanitary conditions.
- People who live in institutions with poor sanitary conditions.
- Men who have sex with men.

What are the Symptoms?

Most people who are infected with *E. histolytica* have no symptoms. For those people who do have symptoms, they are often quite mild and can include loose stools, and stomach pain.

Amebic dysentery is a severe form of amebiasis. The symptoms include stomach pain, bloody stools, and fever. In rare cases *E. histolytica* invades the liver and forms an abscess. Even less commonly, it spreads to other parts of the body, such as the lungs or brain.

What is the Treatment?

Several medications are available to treat amebiasis. Your physician may prescribe medication.

How Can You Prevent Amebiasis?

Several medications are available to treat amebiasis. Your physician may prescribe medication.

How Can you Prevent Amebiasis?

The parasite is passed in the stool of humans. It also may be found in soil, food, water, or surfaces that have been contaminated with the feces from infected humans.

Ways to prevent the spread of *E. histolytica* infection are:

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after using the toilet and before eating or handling food.
- Avoid swallowing recreational water (pools, hot tubs, lakes or rivers).
- Keep diapered children or anyone with diarrhea out of swimming pools.
- Avoid using ice or drinking untreated water when travelling in countries where the water supply might be unsafe.
- Use only safe water to wash all vegetables and fruits before eating.