

Amebiasis

What is Amebiasis?

Amebiasis is an infection of the intestines caused by an amoeba parasite, *Entamoeba histolytica*.

Who is at Risk?

Anyone can get amebiasis but it is most common in developing countries that have poor sanitary conditions.

People at risk include:

- immigrants from developing countries
- people who traveled to developing countries
- people who live in institutions that have poor sanitary conditions
- people who have oral-anal sex.

How Amebiasis is Spread?

The parasite is spread by:

- putting hands contaminated with stool (poop) in your mouth
- putting anything into your mouth that has touched infected stool
- swallowing something such as food or water that is contaminated with the parasite
- touching surfaces that have the parasite and bringing parasite eggs to your mouth.

What are the Symptoms of Amebiasis?

In general, 1 to 2 in 10 people infected will become sick with symptoms slowly over 1 to 3 weeks.

Symptoms are often quite mild and can include:

- loose stools
- stomach pain or cramping.

The disease is more severe in children, elderly, malnourished, or pregnant women. A more severe form of amebiasis (amebic dysentery) has the following symptoms:

- stomach pain
- bloody stools
- fever.

Call your health care provider if you have any of the above symptoms, are at-risk, or if you been in contact with someone who could be infected.

How is Amebiasis Found?

Your health care provider will ask you to submit stool samples. Because the *Entamoeba histolytica* is not always found in every sample, you may be asked to submit several stool samples from several different days.

(over)

More specific tests, such as blood tests, may be needed to confirm you have amebiasis.

You may need to have a blood test if your health care provider thinks the *Entamoeba histolytica* parasite has spread to other parts of your body (rare). Other tests may be needed.

How is Amebiasis Treated?

Your health care provider will give you a prescription for one antibiotic if the parasite has not made you sick. You will likely be given prescriptions for two antibiotics if the parasite has made you sick. Take the prescription(s) as directed.

Do not take over-the-counter medicine to treat diarrhea. That can make your symptoms worse.

What Should You Eat and Drink if You are Traveling to a County That has Poor Sanitary Conditions?

If you are traveling to a developing country, the following guidelines will help you prevent getting the *Entamoeba histolytica* or other parasites and germs.

■ Do drink:

- bottled water with an unbroken seal
- tap water boiled for at least 1 minute
- carbonated (bubbly) drinks from sealed cans or bottles.

■ Do not drink or eat:

- fountain drinks or any drinks with ice cubes
- milk, cheese or any dairy products that have not been pasteurized
- food or drinks sold by street vendors
- fresh fruit or vegetables that you did not peel yourself.

You may filter your water by running it through an “absolute 1 micron or less” filter and dissolving iodine tablets in the filtered water. You can buy the filters and tablets in camping or outdoor supply stores.

Take extra precautions if you are formula feeding your baby. Go to [cdc.gov/travel](https://www.cdc.gov/travel) for more information.

How Can You Keep From Spreading the Disease?

To keep from spreading the disease:

- Take the antibiotic(s) as prescribed.
- Practice good personal hygiene.
- Wash your hands with warm, soapy water for 20 seconds each time after going to the bathroom, before handling food and after changing diapers.
- Use condoms if you are sexually active.

Information adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the 2021 American Academy of Pediatrics “Red Book.”