



AMEBIASIS

WHAT IS AMEBIASIS?

AMEBIASIS IS AN INTESTINAL ILLNESS CAUSED BY A TINY INTESTINAL PARASITE CALLED *Entamoeba histolytic*.

WHO GETS AMEBIASIS?

ANYONE CAN GET AMEBIASIS, BUT IT IS SEEN MORE OFTEN IN PEOPLE ARRIVING FROM TROPICAL OR SUBTROPICAL AREAS, INDIVIDUALS IN HOSPITALS OR INSTITUTIONS, AND IN MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN.

HOW IS THIS PARASITE SPREAD?

AMEBIASIS IS CAUGHT BY SWALLOWING THE CYST STAGE OF THE PARASITE IN INFECTED FOOD OR WATER. IT CAN ALSO BE SPREAD BY PERSON-TO-PERSON CONTACT.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF AMEBIASIS?

PEOPLE ILL WITH THIS PARASITE MAY HAVE MILD OR SEVERE SYMPTOMS OR NO SYMPTOMS AT ALL. THE MILD FORM OF AMEBIASIS INCLUDES NAUSEA, LOOSE STOOLS, WEIGHT LOSS, STOMACH PAIN, AND OCCASIONAL FEVER. ONLY SOMETIMES WILL THE PARASITE CAUSE A MORE SERIOUS INFECTION.

HOW SOON AFTER INFECTION DO SYMPTOMS APPEAR?

THE SYMPTOMS MAY APPEAR FROM A FEW DAYS TO A FEW MONTHS AFTER INFECTION BUT USUALLY WITHIN TWO TO FOUR WEEKS.

FOR HOW LONG CAN AN INFECTED PERSON CARRY THIS PARASITE?

SOME PEOPLE WITH AMEBIASIS MAY CARRY THE PARASITE FOR WEEKS TO YEARS, OFTEN WITHOUT SYMPTOMS.

WHERE ARE THE PARASITES THAT CAUSE AMEBIASIS FOUND?

INFECTED PEOPLE ARE THE ONLY SOURCES OF THE PARASITE AND THEIR FECAL MATERIAL CAN INFECT WATER OR FOOD, WHICH THEN MAY SPREAD THE DISEASE TO OTHERS.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR AMEBIASIS?

SPECIFIC MEDICATIONS CAN BE GIVEN BY A DOCTOR TO TREAT AMEBIASIS.

SHOULD AN INFECTED PERSON BE EXCLUDED FROM WORK OR SCHOOL?

GENERALLY, THE INFECTED PERSON CAN STILL GO TO WORK OR SCHOOL.

WHAT SAFETY MEASURES SHOULD THE INFECTED PERSON FOLLOW?

THE MOST IMPORTANT MEASURES ARE CAREFUL HAND WASHING AFTER EACH TOILET VISIT AND PROPER REMOVAL OF SEWAGE. FOOD HANDLERS AND INDIVIDUALS PROVIDING CARE TO HOSPITAL OR INSTITUTIONALIZED PATIENTS MUST GET THE APPROVAL OF THE LOCAL OR STATE HEALTH DEPARTMENT BEFORE RETURNING TO THEIR JOBS. HOMOSEXUAL MEN SHOULD NOT HAVE INTIMATE CONTACT UNTIL THEY ARE WELL.