

AMEOBIASIS

What is Ameobiasis?

This is an intestinal disease caused by the ingestion of cysts produced by the parasite *Entamoeba histolytica*. This disease is commonly known as amoebic dysentery. The most common symptoms include severe bloody or mucousy diarrhea, fever, chills, and abdominal discomfort.

How is Ameobiasis spread?

It is commonly spread by water and food contaminated with feces carrying the amoebic cysts. The parasite travels from feces to the mouth by food that has been infected by flies, through improper hand hygiene by food handlers, or vegetables that have come in contact with feces. Amoebiasis may also be acquired sexually through anal-oral contact. Community outbreaks usually involve water supplies that have been contaminated with human sewage containing the parasitic cysts.

Illness usually occurs within two to four weeks of exposure. Individuals may have the parasite present in their gut for years if treatment is not obtained. Some people may not know they are spreading the disease because they may not have any symptoms. These people are called "asymptomatic carriers".

How can I prevent illness?

1. Discard sewage in a sanitary manner. Sewage should be disposed of in a municipal sewer or an approved private sewage disposal system.
2. Water supplies should be safe to drink and protected against sewage pollution.
3. Wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water immediately after using the toilet, before preparing or eating food, and after contact with infected people or their belongings.
4. Control flies by using approved methods such as storing garbage in covered containers, screening of doors and windows, and using light traps.
5. Travelers to areas with poor sanitary conditions should only eat thoroughly cooked foods, served hot.
6. Do not eat raw fruits and vegetables that are visibly soiled or may have been washed with contaminated water. Peel before eating.
7. Do not drink untreated water.

... over

Kingston
221 Portsmouth Avenue
Kingston, ON K7M 1V5
Tel: 613-549-1232
1-800-267-7875
Fax: 613-549-7896

Cloyne
P.O. Box 59
14209 Highway 41
Cloyne, ON K0H 1K0
Tel: 613-336-8989
Fax: 613-336-0522

Napanee
41 Dundas Street
Napanee, ON
K7R 1Z5
Tel: 613-354-3357
Fax: 354-6267

Sharbot Lake
P.O. Box 149
1130 Elizabeth Street
Sharbot Lake, ON K0H 2P0
Tel: 613-279-2151
Fax: 613-279-3997

8. Chlorination of water is not always effective in killing the cysts. For treatment of small amounts of drinking water, bring water to a rolling boil for 5 minutes. Water may also be treated with iodine as follows: 8 drops of 2% tincture of iodine per quart of water or 12.5 mL of a saturated aqueous solution of iodine crystals per quart of water. Allow a contact time of at least 10 minutes (30 minutes if water is cold) before drinking. Water may also be safe for drinking when filtered through portable filters <math><1.0 \mu</math> in size.