

## What kind of infection is it?

*Entamoeba histolytica* is a single celled parasite.

## How do people get infected?

- *E. histolytica* is most common in tropical countries with poor sanitation.
- People develop infection with *E. histolytica* (amebiasis) when they put something in their mouth or swallow something that is contaminated with the stool (poop) of a person with amebiasis.
- Infections often occur among people who have lived in or traveled to poor tropical countries.
- *E. histolytica* can be transmitted during sexual activity.

## What are the usual symptoms?

- Most people who are infected with *E. histolytica* never develop any symptoms.
- If symptoms develop, it is usually several weeks after exposure.
- Symptoms can include mild diarrhea, to severe diarrhea with blood or mucous in the stool and stomach pain. Weight loss is common.

## How long does it last?

- Without treatment symptoms often last many weeks.

## How is it treated?

- Prevent and treat dehydration. Warning signs of dehydration include dry mouth, decreased urination, or dizziness.
- A number of prescription drugs can be used to treat *E. histolytica*. Take any medication you are prescribed as directed.

## Are there possible complications?

- Dehydration can occur. Prevent and treat dehydration. Warning signs of dehydration include dry mouth, decreased urination, or dizziness.
- *E. histolytica* can rarely cause pockets of pus (abscesses) to develop in the liver, lung or brain.

## Comments:

- Wash hands carefully after using the bathroom, changing diapers and before and after cooking.
- The best way to avoid *E. histolytica* is to avoid food and water that may be contaminated with human waste.
- When traveling to poor countries, avoid untreated water or ice made with untreated water. Eat cooked foods that are served hot.

## Resources:

- [CDC Handout](#)