



Questions and Answers About **AMEBIASIS**



1. What is amebiasis?

Amebiasis (am-e-BI-a-sis) is an infection of the bowel caused by a parasite (an organism living in or on another organism).

2. Who gets amebiasis?

It is most common in people who live in underdeveloped countries that have poor sanitary conditions. Here in the United States, immigrants from or travelers to underdeveloped countries may develop amebiasis.

3. How is amebiasis spread?

Amebiasis is transmitted from person to person by the fecal-oral route. The spread of amebiasis can occur if an infected person does not wash their hands properly after going to the bathroom. When people touch objects or eat contaminated food they can get the parasite on their hands and into their mouths. People are infectious as long as the parasite is shed in the stool.

4. How do you know if you have amebiasis?

Many people who are infected with amebiasis do not have symptoms. About 10% to 20% of people who are infected with the disease will become sick from the infection. People who do become sick usually develop symptoms within 2 to 4 weeks. Some of the mild symptoms can include loose stools, stomach pain, and stomach cramping. Amebic dysentery is a severe form of amebiasis and is associated with stomach pain, bloody stools, and fever. If you think you have amebiasis, contact your doctor.

5. How is amebiasis treated?

Once your health care provider has told you that you have amebiasis, you may have to take medication. Treatment must be prescribed by a physician. Specific treatment will vary from person to person.

6. Should infected people be restricted or excluded from work?

Food employees who are infected must not work until they are on appropriate medication and they have received clearance from their physician.

7. What can be done to prevent the spread of amebiasis?

The risk of spreading infection is low if the infected person is treated with appropriate antibiotics and they practice good personal hygiene. To prevent spreading the infection, every member of the household should wash their hands with soap and clean water often, especially at these times:

- Before eating and drinking, or preparing food.
- Before preparing baby formula.
- After contact with someone who is sick.
- After using the bathroom or changing diapers.
- After handling pets or animals.

8. What other information do I need to know about amebiasis?

- Take precaution with food and water when traveling to countries with poor sanitation.
- Children who attend day care centers must be kept at home if they have diarrhea. Dispose of their diapers in a safe and sanitary way.
- If household members develop symptoms, they should be tested for amebiasis.

1. *Amebiasis*. L.A. Department of Public Health. <http://www.lapublichealth.org/acd/>
2. *Amebiasis*. California Department of Public Health. www.cdph.ca.gov/healthinfo
3. *Amebiasis*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. www.cdc.gov/diseasesconditions

For additional resources, please dial 2-1-1 or visit the L.A. County Department of Public Health website <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov>.