

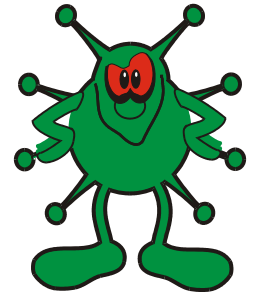


Amoebic Dysentery (A-me-bic Dis-en-tree)

What is Amoebic Dysentery?

Amoebic dysentery (amoebiasis) is an infection of the intestine (gut) caused by an amoeba called *Entamoeba histolytica*.

Amoebae are parasites that are found in contaminated food or drink. They enter the body through the mouth when the contaminated food or drink is swallowed. The amoebae are then able to move through the digestive system and take up residence in the intestine and cause an infection.



Entamoeba histolytica can exist in two forms in contaminated food and drink:

1. as free amoebae (known as 'trophozoites')
2. as infective cysts, which are a group of amoebae surrounded by a protective wall, that have been passed (excreted) in the carrier's faeces (human or animal).

If you swallow contaminated food that contains the free amoebae (trophozoites) hardly anything is likely to happen, because they usually die in the stomach on account of its acidity.

If you swallow contaminated food that contains the infective cysts there is a risk of infection, as when the cysts reach the intestine of a person the individual amoebae are released from the cysts and are able to cause infection.

Symptoms

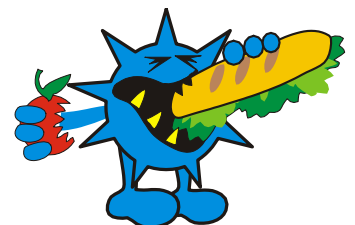
Amoebic dysentery may not demonstrate any symptoms for long periods of time (months, even years). However, infected individuals still excrete cysts and, consequently, infect their surroundings.

Symptoms of amoebic dysentery are often mild and vague, but there is persistent low-grade abdominal discomfort and nausea, mild diarrhoea with blood and mucus, and sometimes tenderness over the liver.

Liver abscesses may cause fever and weakness, referred pain in the right shoulder (referred pain means pain apparently in one place that is actually caused somewhere else), nausea, jaundice, loss of appetite and loss of weight.

How does Dysentery spread?

In this country Dysentery is normally spread person to person. The germs causing dysentery enter the mouth on unwashed hands, these germs then breed rapidly in the bowel.



A lapse in good hygiene practice is the commonest cause of infection, objects such as pens, pencils, toys, cutlery, toilet and door handles etc, can be contaminated by an infected person allowing the germ to be picked up by the next person to use the object.

Food and drink that has been handled by an infected person can be contaminated and cause illness in those consuming it.

Prevention:

Scrupulous personal hygiene including thorough handwashing. *The use of liquid soaps and paper towels is advised if possible.*

What to do if you have someone ill or infected with food poisoning in the house

Anyone suffering from or carrying Dysentery SHOULD NOT prepare food for others to eat.



We would recommend that you DO NOT have friends in for meals or to stay with you whilst the infection is present.

Whilst diarrhoea persists, great care should be taken to clean the toilet including taps, door and flush handles after the patient has used it.

- Use a household disinfectant or bleach.
- Use disposable paper tissues for cleaning seat, flushing handle etc.
- Wash hands thoroughly afterwards, preferably with an antibacterial hand wash soap.

Hands should be washed thoroughly with hand soap and hot running water for at least ten seconds, to minimise the risk of cross-contamination.

Cloth towels are not recommended for cleaning or drying as they get dirty quickly and can spread bacteria from one person to another, disposable tissues/towels are recommended.



Other Precautions

Children should stay away from school until 48 hours after **all** symptoms have ceased. Further advice in this case must be sought from the Environmental Services Department. The school should be informed of the type of illness.

Can I Still Work?

People who work in food businesses, hospitals or nursery schools SHOULD NOT return to work until 48 hours after all symptoms have ceased. The manager of the food business should be notified of any illness you or any family member, who is ill, may have.

If people are formally excluded from work, they will not normally be required to return to work until 48 hours after **all** symptoms have ceased.

Please remember that you **may** still carry the organism for a number of weeks after the symptoms clear and scrupulous personal hygiene must be observed during this time.

NOTE: THERE MAY BE TYPES OF FOOD POISONING WHICH WILL REQUIRE YOU TO REMAIN OFF WORK UNTIL CLEARANCE IS GIVEN BY YOUR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER. YOU WILL BE ADVISED IF THIS IS THE CASE.

For further information, contact your local Environmental Protection Division, telephone number 01932 838383, or in case of continuing illness, consult your family doctor.