

## INFECTIOUS DISEASES *facts*

# *Amebiasis – Facts*

### **What is amebiasis?**

Amebiasis is a disease caused by a one-celled parasite called *Entamoeba histolytica* (*ent-a-ME-ba his-to-LI-ti-ka*) found in the stool.

### **What are the symptoms of amebiasis?**

Not everyone with the disease will become sick. Symptoms can be mild such as loose stools and abdominal cramping. In severe cases there may also be blood in the stools and fever. Rarely amebiasis can make you sick in other parts of your body such as your liver, lungs or brain.

### **How soon do symptoms appear?**

You may become sick in 2-4 weeks but sometimes more quickly or more slowly.

### **How is amebiasis diagnosed?**

It is diagnosed when your stool is examined under a microscope. You may have to send several specimens on different days because amebiasis may not be found in every sample. A blood test may be done if your doctor or health care provider thinks amebiasis has made you sick in other parts of your body.

### **How is amebiasis transmitted?**

It can be transmitted when you eat something that has been contaminated by the stool of a person infected with amebiasis. Drinking water or eating food contaminated with amebiasis could also make you sick. This disease can be transmitted when you put anything into the mouth which may have infected stool on it. This is why it is very important to ensure that whatever is put into the mouth is clean and after sexual activity by not eating, smoking or putting fingers into the mouth until you've washed your hands.

### **What is the treatment for amebiasis?**

Antibiotic treatment is available through your physician or health care provider.

### **What can be done to prevent amebiasis?**

It is important to wash your hands after using the toilet, changing diapers and before preparing or eating food. Washing fruits and vegetables before eating them and drinking only clean water can prevent amebiasis. Avoid sexual practices that may permit transmission.

### **Are there any special concerns about amebiasis?**

Individuals with this parasite, who provide services to others, particularly seniors or children are excluded from work while symptomatic.

For more information please call the Communicable Disease Team in the Barrie Office at (705) 721-7520.

#### References

American Public Health Association. (2000). Amoebiasis. In J. Chin (Ed.), Control of communicable diseases manual (17<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 11-15). Washington, DC: American Public Health Association.