Non-Pathogenic Intestinal Amebae Infection

Some *parasites* (some living thing that lives on another living thing) that are commonly found in peoples' intestines and stool specimens never make them sick. Germs that do not cause illness are called "nonpathogenic". These parasites do not harm the body, even in people with weak immune systems.

WHAT ARE THE NAMES OF SOME OF THE MOST COMMON NONPATHOGENIC AMEBAE?

Entamoeba dispar, Entamoeba moshkivskii, Entamoeba coli, and Entamoeba hartmanni

WHERE DO THESE PARASITES LIVE IN THE BODY?

They are found only in the intestines, not in other parts of the body.

CAN THESE PARASITES CAUSE SYMPTOMS?

No.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I MIGHT BE INFECTED WITH ONE OR MORE OF THESE PARASITES?

See your health care provider.

HOW IS INFECTION DIAGNOSED?

By examining a sample of your stool under a microscope.

I WAS TOLD I AM INFECTED WITH ONE OR MORE OF THESE PARASITES. HOW DID I BECOME INFECTED?

You may have become infected by swallowing something (food or water), or touching something (then putting your fingers in your mouth) that was contaminated with stool from an infected person.

I HAVE NOT BEEN FEELING WELL. COULD THESE PARASITES BE CAUSING MY SYMPTOMS?

No. You and your health care provider should look for other causes of your symptoms. At the same time you became infected with these harmless parasites (for example, through contaminated food or water), you may have become infected with germs that can cause intestinal illness. Your health care provider might want to check your stool for bacteria, viruses, or other parasites that can cause illness. Another possibility is that your symptoms are not caused by an infection.

HOW LONG COULD THESE PARASITES STAY IN MY BODY?

They can stay in the body for weeks, months, and even years. They never spread from the intestines to other parts of the body.

TO BE ON THE SAFE SIDE, SHOULD I BE TREATED TO GET THESE PARASITES OUT OF MY BODY?

No, it is not necessary. These parasites are harmless.

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. If you have any questions about the disease described above or think that you may have a parasitic infection, consult a health care provider.

Information courtesy of the CDC.

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