

Balantidiasis is a rare intestinal infection caused by the bacterium, *Balantidium coli*, a single celled parasite (ciliate protozoan) that frequently infects pigs but on occasion (rarely) infects humans. Some infected people may have no symptoms or only mild diarrhea and abdominal discomfort but others may experience more severe symptoms reminiscent of an acute inflammation of the intestines. Symptoms of Balantidiasis may be similar to those of other infections that cause intestinal inflammation, for example, amoebic dysentery. Most people with Balantidiasis are asymptomatic or present mild symptoms. Some individuals may become acutely ill with abnormally high temperatures, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, and bloody diarrhea. Such conditions may result in the excessive loss of water from the body (dehydration) and extreme exhaustion (prostration), especially if *B. coli* attacks the intestinal lining causing inflammation and possibly “crater-like” areas of damage (ulceration). In very severe cases, the ulcers may be deep enough to puncture the intestinal wall (perforation) resulting in acute inflammation of the peritoneum, the membrane that lines the abdomen (peritonitis). Occasionally, the ulcer may diminish lung function. Balantidiasis is a rare infectious disease caused by the single celled (protozoan) parasite *Balantidium coli*. This parasite may be passed directly to humans by contact with pig feces or indirectly by drinking contaminated water. Poor nutrition, a compromised immune system, or other illnesses may make a person vulnerable to more severe symptoms of this disease. Balantidiasis is a rare infection that affects males and females in equal numbers. It typically occurs in tropical regions such as Brazil, New Guinea, and southern Iran.