

Filariasis is an infectious tropical disease caused by any one of several thread-like parasitic round worms. The two species of worms most often associated with this disease are *Wuchereria bancrofti* and *Brugia malayi*. The larval form of the parasite transmits the disease to humans by the bite of a mosquito. In the early stages of the infection, the patient characteristically complains of fever, chills, headaches and skin lesions. Any one of several antiparasitic agents may be effective in eliminating the worm. However, if the disease is left untreated, obstruction of the lymph flow will cause particular areas of the body especially the legs and external genitals, to swell profoundly. Symptoms are primarily a response to adult worms that cause inflammation. Chronic inflammation may progress to hardening of the lymphatic vessels (fibrosis) and obstruction of the lymph flow. Filariasis is a rare infectious tropical disorder caused by the round worm parasites (nematode) *Wuchereria bancrofti* or *Brugia malayi*. Symptoms result primarily from inflammatory reactions to the adult worms. Some people may also develop hypersensitivity reactions to the small larval parasites (microfilariae). Filariasis is common disease in tropical regions of the world. The organism *W. bancrofti* is present throughout Africa, Asia, China, and South America. *B. malayi* is found in southern and southeast Asia. Filariasis is extremely rare in North America and occurs only when these organisms are imported from tropical regions. The infection is transmitted by several different types of tropical mosquitos which transfer the larval stage of the organism (microfilariae) from one host to another. Lymphatic filariasis affects about 120 million people worldwide. Short-term travelers to areas where it is endemic are at low risk for this infection. People who visit endemic areas for extended periods of time, and especially those who are in areas or situations in which they are intensely exposed to infected mosquitoes, can become infected. Most infections seen in the U.S. are in immigrants from endemic countries, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).