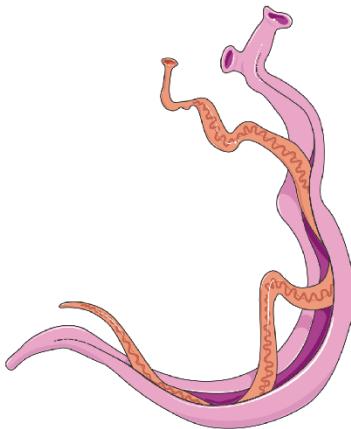


Bilharzia (Schistosomiasis)



Overview:

- Bilharzia is a parasitic disease caused by a kind of parasitic worms, it can be acute or chronic.
- Care should be taken when traveling to areas where bilharzia is endemic.
- The infection occurs when infected individuals contaminate fresh water sources with feces or urine carrying the eggs of this parasite.
- Symptoms result from the body's reaction to the worms' eggs, which may result in a rash or itch.
- The infection can be treated with some medications and methods of prevention.

Symptoms:

The symptoms are actually a result from the body's reaction to the worms' eggs, not the worms themselves. That's why the symptoms differ from one person to the other:

- Within days, you may develop a rash or itch.
- Within 1-2 months, you may develop a fever, chills, cough, and muscle aches.
- Children may frequently suffer from anemia, poor nutrition, stunted growth and a reduced capability to learn.

Long-term symptoms:

Some people with bilharzia develop more serious problems in the parts of the body where the eggs were present.

- Digestive system: infection in the digestive system could cause anemia, stomachache, swelling, diarrhea, and blood in stool.
- As for the urinary system, the infection could cause cystitis, pain when passing urine, a frequent need to urinate, and blood in the urine.
- A cough resulting in blood and shortness of breath.
- If the nervous system is affected, seizures, headache, dizziness, and weakness and numbness in the legs can occur.

Risk Factors:

- Living in or traveling to areas where schistosomiasis exists
- Coming in contact with fresh contaminated water
- Living in areas with poor sanitation



Complications:

- Anemia
 - Fibrosis of intestinal veins and the liver
 - Lung and bladder damage
 - Splenomegaly
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- In severe cases, the infection may lead to neurological complications causing death.

Treatment:

A safe and effective prescription drug is available for treating schistosomiasis and killing worms caused by all types of bilharzias. This drug is more effective once the worms grow slightly; therefore, treatment may be delayed for a few weeks after the infection. The doctor may also repeat the treatment a few weeks after you take the first dose.

Prevention:

- Avoid swimming or playing in fresh water.
- Drink filtered or boiled, cooled water that is free of parasites. Although schistosomiasis is not transmitted by drinking contaminated water, if this water comes into contact with the lips, the person may become infected.



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