



[Home](#) → [Health Topics](#) → Parasitic Diseases

URL of this page: <https://medlineplus.gov/parasitiddiseases.html>

Parasitic Diseases

Parasites are living things that use other living things - like your body - for food and a place to live. You can get them from contaminated food or water, a bug bite, or sexual contact. Some parasitic diseases are easily treated and some are not.



Parasites range in size from tiny, one-celled organisms called protozoa to worms that can be seen with the naked eye. Some parasitic diseases occur in the United States. Contaminated water supplies can lead to [Giardia infections](#) [<https://medlineplus.gov/giardiafections.html>] . Cats can transmit [toxoplasmosis](#) [<https://medlineplus.gov/toxoplasmosis.html>] , which is dangerous for pregnant women. Others, like [malaria](#) [<https://medlineplus.gov/malaria.html>] , are common in other parts of the world.

If you are traveling [<https://medlineplus.gov/travelershealth.html>] , it's important to drink only water you know is safe. Prevention is especially important. There are no vaccines for parasitic diseases. Some medicines are available to treat parasitic infections.

Start Here

- [Alphabetical Index of Parasitic Diseases](https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/listing/) [<https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/listing/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- [Germs: Understand and Protect against Bacteria, Viruses, and Infections](https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/infectious-diseases/in-depth/germs/ART-20045289?p=1) [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/infectious-diseases/in-depth/germs/ART-20045289?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/infectious-diseases/in-depth/germs/art-20045289?p=1>]
- [Parasites and Foodborne Illness](https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/foodborne-illness-and-disease/pathogens/parasites-and-foodborne-illness) [<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/foodborne-illness-and-disease/pathogens/parasites-and-foodborne-illness>] (Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service)

Diagnosis and Tests

- [Diagnosis of Parasitic Diseases](https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/testing-diagnosis/) [<https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/testing-diagnosis/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- [Ova and Parasite Test](https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/ova-and-parasite-test/) [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/ova-and-parasite-test/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/prueba-de-huevos-y-parasitos/>]
- [String test for intestinal parasites](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003735.htm) [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003735.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003735.htm>]
- [Xylose Testing](https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/xylose-testing/) [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/xylose-testing/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/pruebas-de-xilosa/>]



Prevention and Risk Factors

- [Hand Hygiene Frequently Asked Questions](https://www.cdc.gov/clean-hands/faq/index.html) [<https://www.cdc.gov/clean-hands/faq/index.html>]
(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- [Water Disinfection for Travelers](https://www.cdc.gov/yellow-book/hcp/preparing-international-travelers/water-disinfection-for-travelers.html) [<https://www.cdc.gov/yellow-book/hcp/preparing-international-travelers/water-disinfection-for-travelers.html>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- [What Causes Parasitic Diseases](https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/causes/) [<https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/causes/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)



Related Issues

- Planning for Parasitic Diseases when Travelling [<https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/travelers/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Post-Travel Parasitic Disease Including Evaluation of Eosinophilia [<https://www.cdc.gov/yellow-book/hcp/post-travel-evaluation/post-travel-parasitic-disease.html>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Specifics

- About Balamuthia Infection [<https://www.cdc.gov/balamuthia/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- About Naegleria fowleri Infection [<https://www.cdc.gov/naegleria/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/naegleria/es/about/acerca-de-la-infeccion-por-naegleria-fowleri.html>]
- About Swimmer's Itch [<https://www.cdc.gov/swimmers-itch/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Acanthamoeba Infections [<https://www.cdc.gov/acanthamoeba/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Blastocystis hominis [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/blastocystis-hominis-infection/symptoms-causes/syc-20351205?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/blastocystis-hominis-infection/symptoms-causes/syc-20351205?p=1>]
- Cyclosporiasis (Cyclospora Infection) [<https://www.cdc.gov/cyclosporiasis/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Schistosomiasis (Bilharzia) [<https://www.niaid.nih.gov/diseases-conditions/schistosomiasis-bilharzia>]
 (National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases)
- Tapeworm Infection [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/tapeworm/symptoms-causes/syc-20378174?p=1>]
(Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
- Types of Neglected Tropical Diseases [<https://www.niaid.nih.gov/research/neglected-tropical-diseases-types>]
 (National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases)

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Lice Infestations [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Lice+Infestations%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Parasitic Diseases [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Parasitic+Diseases%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles


References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Re-examining the drivers of variation in parasite loads across hosts in... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40715832>]
- Article: PI3K/AKT signaling in parasites and parasite diseases: Role and therapeutic potential. [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40643963>]
- Article: Construction of a preliminary digital parasite specimen database for parasitology education... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40596597>]
- Parasitic Diseases -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Parasitic+Diseases%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Reference Desk

- Parasitic Glossary [<https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/glossary/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Find an Expert

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [<https://www.cdc.gov/>]
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/spanish/>]
- National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases [<https://www.niaid.nih.gov/>] 

Children

- Ascariasis (For Parents) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/ascariasis.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/ascariasis.html>]
- Children [<https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/children/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Collecting a Stool Sample for Testing (For Parents) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/stool-tests-done.html>]
(Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/stool-tests-done.html>]
- Stool Tests (For Parents) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/labtest8.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/labtest8.html>]
- Toxocariasis (For Parents) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/toxocariasis.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/toxocariasis.html>]

Women

- Women and Parasites [<https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/women-basics/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Patient Handouts

- Amebiasis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000298.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000298.htm>]
- Amebic liver abscess [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000211.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000211.htm>]
- Ascariasis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000628.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000628.htm>]
- Creeping eruption [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001454.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001454.htm>]
- Stool ova and parasites exam [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003756.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003756.htm>]
- Tapeworm infection - beef or pork [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001391.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001391.htm>]



[Amebiasis \[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000298.htm\]](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000298.htm)

[Amebic liver abscess \[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000211.htm\]](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000211.htm)

[Ascariasis \[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000628.htm\]](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000628.htm)

[Creeping eruption \[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001454.htm\]](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001454.htm)

[Cysticercosis \[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000627.htm\]](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000627.htm)

[D-xylose absorption \[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003606.htm\]](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003606.htm)

[Echinococcus \[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000676.htm\]](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000676.htm)

[Fish tapeworm infection \[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001375.htm\]](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001375.htm)

[Hookworm infection \[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000629.htm\]](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000629.htm)

[Rectal culture \[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003759.htm\]](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003759.htm)

[Schistosomiasis \[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001321.htm\]](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001321.htm)

[Sleeping sickness \[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001362.htm\]](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001362.htm)

[Small bowel tissue smear/biopsy \[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003732.htm\]](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003732.htm)

[Smear of duodenal fluid aspirate \[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003729.htm\]](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003729.htm)

[Stool ova and parasites exam \[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003756.htm\]](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003756.htm)

[Strongyloidiasis \[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000630.htm\]](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000630.htm)

[Tapeworm infection - beef or pork \[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001391.htm\]](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001391.htm)

[Tapeworm infection - hymenolepis \[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001378.htm\]](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001378.htm)

[Trichinosis \[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000631.htm\]](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000631.htm)

[Visceral larva migrans \[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000633.htm\]](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000633.htm)

[Whipworm infection \[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001364.htm\]](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001364.htm)

Related Health Topics

[Body Lice \[https://medlineplus.gov/bodylice.html\]](https://medlineplus.gov/bodylice.html)

[Chagas Disease \[https://medlineplus.gov/chagasdisease.html\]](https://medlineplus.gov/chagasdisease.html)

[Cryptosporidiosis \[https://medlineplus.gov/cryptosporidiosis.html\]](https://medlineplus.gov/cryptosporidiosis.html)

[Foodborne Illness \[https://medlineplus.gov/foodborneillness.html\]](https://medlineplus.gov/foodborneillness.html)

[Giardia Infections \[https://medlineplus.gov/giardia infections.html\]](https://medlineplus.gov/giardia infections.html)

[Head Lice \[https://medlineplus.gov/headlice.html\]](https://medlineplus.gov/headlice.html)

[Leishmaniasis \[https://medlineplus.gov/leishmaniasis.html\]](https://medlineplus.gov/leishmaniasis.html)

[Malaria \[https://medlineplus.gov/malaria.html\]](https://medlineplus.gov/malaria.html)

[Pinworms \[https://medlineplus.gov/pinworms.html\]](https://medlineplus.gov/pinworms.html)

[Scabies \[https://medlineplus.gov/scabies.html\]](https://medlineplus.gov/scabies.html)

[Toxoplasmosis \[https://medlineplus.gov/toxoplasmosis.html\]](https://medlineplus.gov/toxoplasmosis.html)

[Traveler's Health \[https://medlineplus.gov/travelershealth.html\]](https://medlineplus.gov/travelershealth.html)

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Parasitic Diseases* is the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases [<http://www.niaid.nih.gov/>]

MedlinePlus links to health information from the National Institutes of Health and other federal government agencies. MedlinePlus also links to health information from non-government Web sites. See our disclaimer [<https://medlineplus.gov/disclaimers.html>] about external links and our quality guidelines [<https://medlineplus.gov/criteria.html>] .

The information on this site should not be used as a substitute for professional medical care or advice. Contact a health care provider if you have questions about your health.

[Learn how to cite this page](#)