



# Parasites are they living inside you? - September 2011

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## What is living inside you?

It is estimated that there are over 1,000 types of parasites that can live in the human body. These unfriendly creatures are prevalent in our food, water, pets, and gardens, to name a few.

Normally in a healthy individual, the immune system is capable of destroying these parasites, but if this system is compromised in any way then this enhances the possibility of a parasitic attack. Once in the body, parasites can settle almost anywhere, causing damage to organs, and living off the nutrients of the host depleting the body of essential vitamins/minerals. The intestines offer lots of nutrients for parasites, so this is a common place for them to breed. If parasites are not passed in stools, or not tested as part of a stool test, they will not be detected or identified.

## What are parasites?

There are several families of parasites: Roundworms, Tapeworms, Flukes and Single Cell parasites (protozoa and amoeba). Each group has many kinds of parasites.

Parasites are small microscopic organisms that live in or on our body and take nourishment from another organism. They can damage the human body by causing chronic health problems. They will generally feed on our body cells and the food that we

consume. Parasites will thrive in moist and warm environments, initially invading the intestinal tract, but can then quickly migrate to other parts of the body. In a healthy individual there is always a balance between harmful and beneficial bacteria inside our intestinal tract, but when this balance is disturbed then this environment becomes favourable to parasitic invasion.

## **Types of parasites**

Roundworms are common, it is estimated that 25% of people in the world are infected with roundworms. Infections come from consuming worm eggs found on fruits and vegetables grown in contaminated soil. The "worm" parasites can range from ¼ inch to 33 feet long!

Symptoms of roundworms are digestive disturbances, itchy anus, itchy skin, rashes, intestinal gas, weight gain, blood sugar imbalance, fatigue, anaemia, restlessness and teeth grinding at night.

### ***Hookworm***

Found in contaminated food and water, eggs hatch in the intestine then migrate to the lungs through the bloodstream where they are coughed up and swallowed. In the lungs they can cause pneumonia and once back in the intestines they hook themselves into the intestinal walls and feed off us. Hookworms are also caught from dogs and cats when you allow pets to lick you

### ***Whipworm***

Contamination occurs when you touch an object (public shopping cart, salt shaker, doorknob, etc.) that has an egg on it, then put your finger in your mouth - you are infected.

They attach themselves to the intestinal wall where they inject their digestive fluid into the tissue, which then turns into a liquid. They then suck up this liquid. This causes anaemia, bloody stools, lower abdominal pain, weight loss and nausea. Each female can lay 10,000 eggs per day and each adult can live for several years. When the eggs are passed out through your faeces (unseen) they are able to live for three weeks without a host.

### ***Pinworm***

They are the most readily seen of all of the species of parasites, (white and ½ long) because they live in the colon and they come out at night to lay their eggs in the anus and on bedclothes. The eggs can become airborne and are able to live without a host for 2 days. Transmitted by the anus - hand - mouth route. Highest infestation rates are school age children and if one member of a family has pinworms, it is highly likely that all members are infected. If a child scratches, then touches something, the microscopic eggs are easily left for another child to put into their mouth.

## **Tapeworms**

Most tapeworms are ½ inch long, greyish white colour, but some species can grow to 33 feet long and can lay over 1 million eggs per day. Tapeworm bodies are mostly reproductive organs. Their head hooks into the intestinal wall, the length of their bodies is made up of sections that are nothing but ovaries and testes for reproduction and their "tails" release these eggs.

These eggs hatch into larvae that can migrate to other parts of the human body and can form cysts. Even if the sections are broken off, the tapeworm can regenerate itself from only its head. Some tapeworms can live for over 25 years. They live off our nutrients and cause intestinal gas and imbalances.

- **Pork tapeworm** - from undercooked pork or by anus-hand-mouth route, usually affects the eyes and brain.
- **Fish tapeworm** - largest of the species, causes water retention, weight gain, anaemia and usually creates a feeling of hunger.
- **Dogworm** - from pets (cats & dogs), looks like a grain of rice when passed in the stools white/slightly yellowish and they contain the tapeworm eggs.

## **Flukes**

Flukes are smaller parasites that attach themselves to a variety of organs, including the lungs, heart, intestines, brain, bladder, liver and blood vessels, causing inflammation and damage. Fluke eggs have tiny, protruding spines that can cause damage as they migrate through the body. People become infected by eating raw fish, undercooked water plants (such as watercress) and are also carried by dogs, cats and other fish-eating animals. They are also found in beef, chicken, pork and unwashed vegetables.

## **Protozoa (single cell)**

Multiply by duplicating themselves like a bacteria or virus

Can live in female vagina, urethra - causing itching, burning and yellow discharge. Can also live in prostate of men.

- **Malaria** - this is a blood parasite transmitted by mosquitoes that affects red blood cells.
- **Blastocystis Hominis** - very common microscopic parasitic organism that is found throughout the world. They can remain in the intestines for many years. (Unknown how this parasite is transmitted)
- **Giardia Lambia** - Live in drinking water and are not affected by chlorine because of their hard outer shell. They cause severe stomach infections, diarrhoea and abdominal pain with greasy stools that tend to float, fatigue, nausea, weight loss and dehydration.
- **E coli** - this one comes from contaminated meat that is not fully cooked.

## **Treatment available**

The thought of having parasites can be unpleasant, so being proactive about parasite maintenance can make a big difference in your overall health. A preventative program can ease your worries about uninvited guests. Nutrition - eating a balanced diet with lots of fibre - vegetables, fruit, whole grains, nuts, seeds, garlic, figs, pomegranates, cranberry juice, and apple cider vinegar are good foods to include in your diet to control parasites. Parasitic infections set in when the body is alkaline. Keeping the intestines slightly acidic by drinking Cranberry juice or diluted apple cider vinegar (2 tablespoons to eight ounces of water) works well for this.

**Herbal** - Worm wood herb, tea tree, berberine, garlic, goldenseal, peppermint, grapefruit seed extract, rhubarb

**Parasitic colon cleansing**

**Probiotics** - like lactobacillus acidophilus and bifidobacteria.