

Schistosomiasis



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مركز الأمراض الإنتقالية
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Schistosomiasis

Introduction

Schistosomiasis or Bilharzia is a chronic parasitic infection of the gastrointestinal or urogenital tract. Transmission occurs when human skin is exposed to fresh water containing infective forms of the parasite

The Illness

During the first 24–48 hours itching may develop. The body's immune system reacts to the eggs produced by the parasites in two ways:-

Firstly, a flu-like illness develops which may be confused with other illnesses.

Secondly, a longer lasting reaction results in diarrhea, passing blood in the urine or stool, and abdominal distention (bloated stomach).

Treatment

Drugs for this disease do not work well during the early phase of infection so there is no point taking any during the first few weeks after exposure.

Consult an infectious disease physician for further evaluation.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRAVELLERS

Travelers to endemic regions should be advised to:

- Avoid skin contact with fresh water in endemic areas e.g. ponds, lakes and rivers – this includes all water sports (diving, rafting, windsurfing, sailing).
- Swim only in protected swimming pools or safe seawater.
- Drink only bottled or boiled water.
- Attend a medical screening around 8 weeks after exposure has occurred, even if asymptomatic (no symptoms are showing).