

Amebiasis

Agent: *Entamoeba histolytica* (parasite)

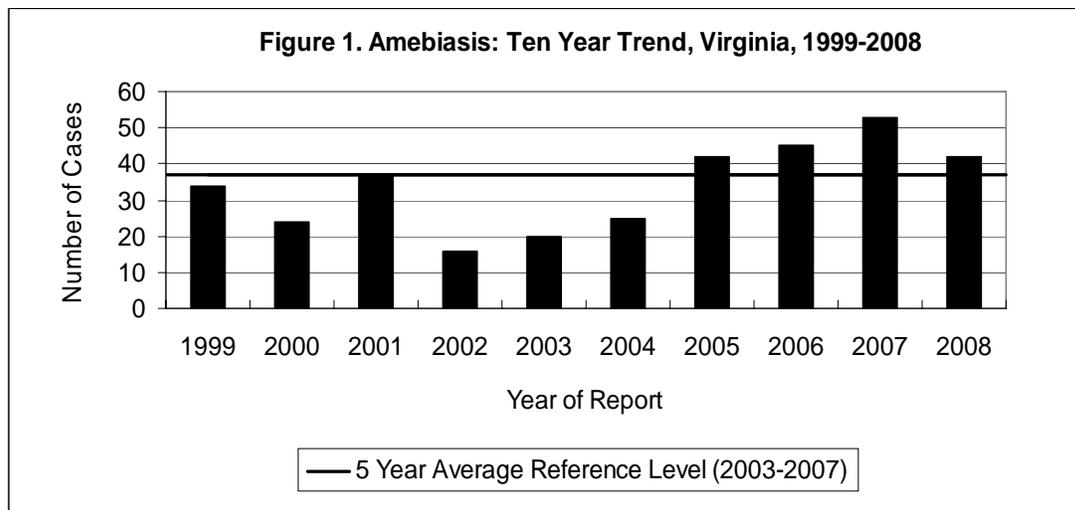
Mode of Transmission: Ingestion of food or water contaminated with amebic cysts or by direct contact with fecal material from infected animals or people.

Signs/Symptoms: Most infections are asymptomatic. Symptomatic infections include diarrhea, which may become severe, bloody or contain mucus; lower abdominal pain; straining to pass stool or urine; weight loss; fever; chills; and constipation. Symptoms may become chronic.

Prevention: Careful hand hygiene after each toilet visit and before preparing and eating food.

Other Important Information: Invasive amebiasis is mostly a disease of young adults and is rare in children under five years of age.

The 42 cases of amebiasis reported in Virginia during 2008 represent a 21% decrease from the 53 cases reported in 2007, and a 13% increase from the five year average of 37 cases per year. This is the first annual decrease in reported cases since 2002 (Figure 1).



The 20-29 year age group had the highest incidence rate (0.8 per 100,000), followed closely by the 30-39, 40-49 and 50-59 year age groups (0.6 per 100,000 each). No cases occurred in infants and the 1-9 year age groups. Because information on race was missing for 81% of reported cases, no statement can be made about the impact by race. The incidence rate for males (0.8 per 100,000) was more than twice the rate for females (0.3 per 100,000). The largest proportion of cases (79%) and highest incidence (1.6 per 100,000) were seen in the northern region. No cases were reported from the southwest region. The other regions had incidence rates of 0.1 to 0.3 per 100,000. While cases occurred throughout the year, 67% were reported during the first and second quarters.