

Amebiasis

Agent: *Entamoeba histolytica* (parasite)

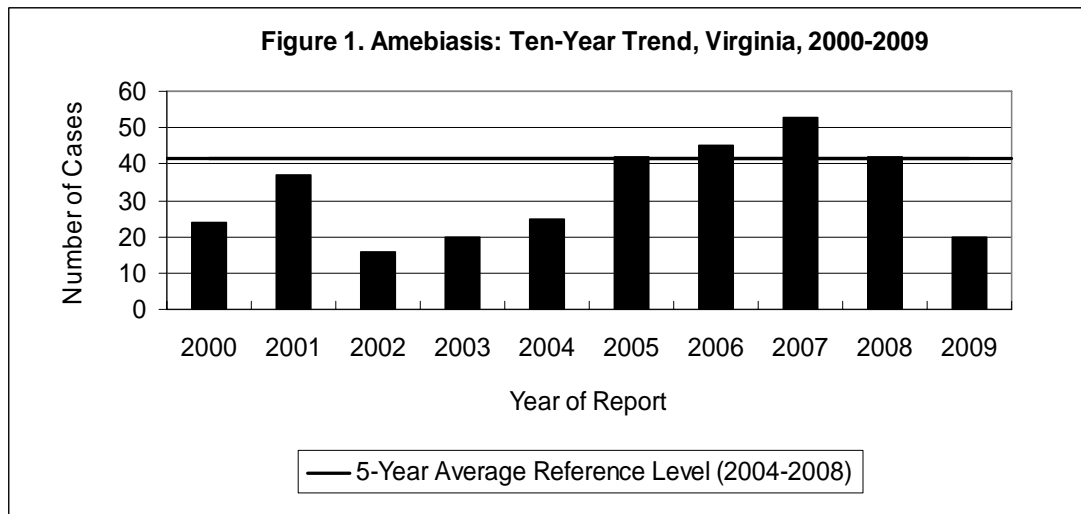
Mode of Transmission: Ingestion of food or water contaminated with amebic cysts or by direct contact with fecal material from infected animals or people.

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: Hands should be washed carefully after using the bathroom, after changing diapers or cleaning a child who has used the bathroom, and before preparing and eating food.

Other Important Information: Amebiasis is most common in people who live in tropical areas with poor sanitary conditions. In the United States, it is most common in people who travel to or emigrate from these tropical areas or in people living in institutions that have poor sanitation. Invasive amebiasis is mostly a disease of young adults and is rare in children under five years of age.

Twenty cases of amebiasis were reported in Virginia during 2009. This is a significant decrease (52%) from the 42 cases reported in 2008, and a similar decrease from the five-year average of 41.4 cases per year. It is the second consecutive annual decrease in reported cases from the peak in 2007 (Figure 1). One factor for the observed decrease in the number of reported cases is a change in the case definition that occurred in 2008 which states that laboratory-confirmed cases must also be symptomatic.



The 50-59 year age group had the highest incidence rate (0.5 per 100,000), followed by those aged 20-29 (0.4 per 100,000). No cases occurred in the <1 year age group. Because information on race was missing for 60% of reported cases, no statement can be made about the impact of race. Both males and females had incidence rates of 0.3 per 100,000. The largest proportion of cases (65%) and highest incidence rate (0.6 per 100,000) were seen in the northern region. The other regions had incidence rates of 0.1 to 0.3 per 100,000. While cases occurred throughout the year, 80% were reported during the first two quarters of the year.