

Amebiasis

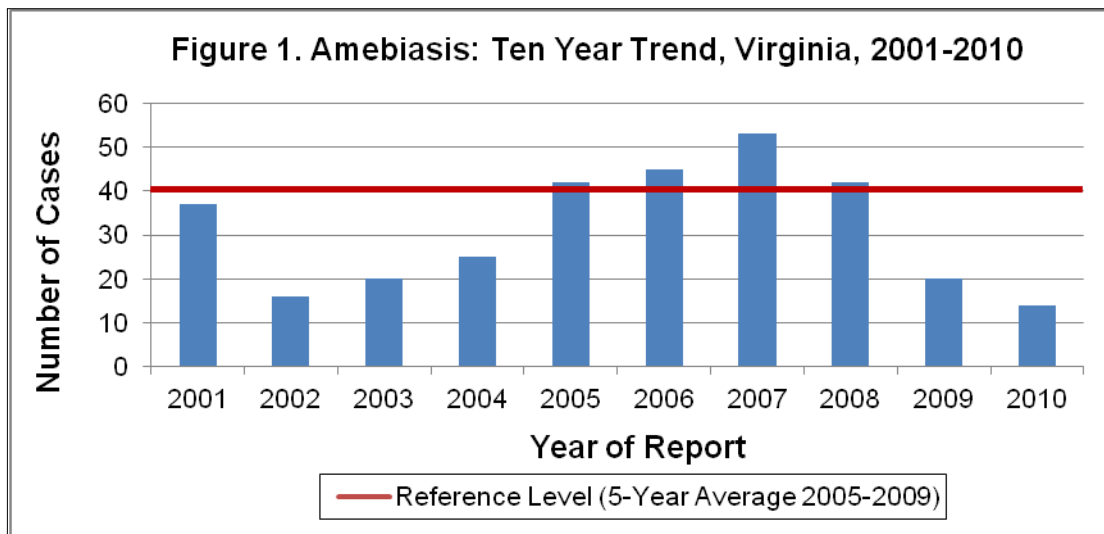
Agent: *Entamoeba histolytica* (parasite)

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.



Fourteen cases of amebiasis were reported in Virginia during 2010. This is 30% less than the 20 cases reported in 2009, and a significant decrease from the five-year average of 40.4 cases per year. It is the third consecutive annual decrease in reported cases from the peak in 2007 (Figure 1). One factor contributing to the observed decrease in the number of reported cases is a change in the case definition that occurred in 2008 and required that laboratory-confirmed cases also be symptomatic.

The 10-19 year age group had the highest incidence rate (0.4 per 100,000), followed by those aged 20-29 (0.3 per 100,000). No cases occurred in the <1 year and 40-49 year age groups. Because information on race was missing for 64% of reported cases, no statement can be made about the distribution by race. Males had a higher incidence than females (0.2 and 0.1 per 100,000, respectively). The largest proportion of cases and highest incidence rate (57%, 0.4 per 100,000) were seen in the northern region. The other regions had incidence rates ranging from 0.1 to 0.2 per 100,000. Cases occurred throughout the year with no seasonal pattern.