**Template letter for GPs of a confirmed case of *E. histolytica* infection**

**PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL**

**Reference no:**

Dear Doctor

Re:

The Health Protection Team has been notified that your patient has been diagnosed with *Entamoeba histolytica (E. histolytica)* infection.

Infection by *E. histolytica* (amoebiasis) is often asymptomatic but may cause intermittent diarrhoea, dysentery-like illness as well as extra-intestinal conditions such as liver abscess. Treatment is recommended in all cases to prevent development of invasive disease at a later date. The infection is usually acquired abroad in developing countries and has an incubation period of 2-4 weeks, but may be months or even years. Your patient will require treatment if this has not previously been arranged. Please consult the BNF, or you may wish to obtain the opinion of an ID physician for guidance on treatment. It is recommended that a stool sample is submitted one week after completing treatment to ensure treatment success (please see attached algorithm for guidance).

There is some evidence that this infection may pass from person to person during close prolonged contact. Therefore, please encourage all close contacts (co-travellers, household and sexual contacts) to be tested for *E. histolytica* infection, whether or not they have symptoms, as early treatment may prevent progression to more serious disease later. This may be arranged by submitting a stool sample to the local laboratory who will arrange for appropriate testing.

Please ensure your patient is made aware of this information and is given the enclosed fact sheet.

Thank you for your help with this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Encl: Algorithm, fact sheet.

**Fact sheet for confirmed cases and contacts of *E. histolytica* infection**

**Amoebiasis (Entamoeba histolytica)**

**Fact sheet for members of the public**

**What is amoebiasis?**

Amoebiasis is a condition caused by infection with a parasite called *Entamoeba histolytica*, often called *E. histolytica*. There are at least six species of Entamoeba that can infect the human gut, but only *E. histolytica* causes disease.

The symptoms are often quite mild and can include loose stools, stomach pain, and stomach cramping. Amoebic dysentery is a more severe form of amoebiasis associated with stomach pain, bloody stools, and fever. Rarely, *E. histolytica* invades the liver and forms an abscess. Even less commonly, it may spread to other parts of the body, such as the lungs or brain.

Symptoms usually start within 2 to 4 weeks, but can be weeks or months after exposure. Nine out of ten people infected with *E. histolytica* do not develop any symptoms.

**How do you get infected with *E. histolytica*?**

You usually get infected with *E. histolytica* by drinking water contaminated by infected faeces or eating food prepared or washed using contaminated water. *E. histolytica* is more likely to infect people who live in developing countries where sanitation and hygiene are poor. In the UK, most people with *E. histolytica* infection have caught it whilst travelling or living abroad. Transmission between sexual partners and people in the same household is also possible.

*E. histolytica* cysts can also survive in the environment for 12 days and up to 30 days in water.

**How can you avoid passing *E. histolytica* to others?**

Infection can spread from person-to-person; however, the risk is low if the infected person is treated with antibiotics and practices good personal hygiene. This includes:

* Washing your hands with soap and water after using the toilet
* Washing your hands before handling, preparing, eating or cooking food
* Cleaning toilet seats, toilet bowls, flush handles, taps and wash hand basins after use with detergent and hot water, followed by a household disinfectant.
* Staying away from work/school/serving food outside of the home until 48hrs after resolution of any episodes of diarrhoea.
* Men who have sex with men should abstain from sexual contact until 48 hours after symptoms have subsided

**How do you treat infection with *E. histolytica*?**

Treatment is usually by one or a combination of two antibiotics, depending on the symptoms you are experiencing. It is very important to complete treatment to prevent passing the infection to others and avoid developing further symptoms at a later stage.

After treatment is completed, testing of a follow-up stool sample is advised to ensure that the parasites have been cleared from your gut.

**General advice to avoid travel related infections**

* Drink bottled water (make sure the seal is intact) or ensure water for drinking is sterilised appropriately
* Do not have ice in your drinks
* Do not eat fresh fruit or vegetables that cannot be peeled before eating
* Avoid eating food or drink bought from street vendors (except drinks in sealed cans or bottles or food which has been thoroughly cooked in front of the traveller and served hot on clean crockery) (See [www.nathnac.net](http://www.nathnac.net) for further advice)

If you develop diarrhoea after travelling abroad to places where *E. histolytica* is common, you should see your doctor so that amoebiasis or other infections can be excluded.

If you have concerns about your health contact NHS 111, visit the NHS Choices website on <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dysentery/Pages/Introduction.aspx> or see your family doctor. Further information is available on the PHE website: [www.gov.uk/phe](http://www.gov.uk/phe).