

Traveller Information Sheets



Schistosomiasis

What is Schistosomiasis?

This is an acute and chronic disease caused by worms. Travellers are exposed to these parasitic worms through recreational exposure to infested water; such as swimming. The parasites are released by snails and can remain alive in the water for 48 hours. They can penetrate skin that is intact.

Schistosomiasis affects humans in two way:

1. Intestinal
2. Urogenital

Where is schistosomiasis found?

Different types of schistosomiasis are found in different geographical locations; the following is taken from the World Health Organisation website;

Intestinal schistosomiasis	Schistosoma mansoni	Africa, the Middle East, the Caribbean, Brazil, Venezuela and Suriname
	Schistosoma japonicum	China, Indonesia, the Philippines
	Schistosoma mekongi	Several districts of Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic
	Schistosoma guineensis and related S. intercalatum	Rain forest areas of central Africa
Urogenital schistosomiasis	Schistosoma haematobium	Africa, the Middle East

What are the symptoms of Schistosomiasis?

Within days after becoming infected, the following symptoms may develop:

- Rash or itchy skin
- Fever
- Chills
- Cough
- Muscle aches can begin within 1-2 months of infection.

Depending upon the type of infestation the following symptoms may also present:

- Intestinal schistosomiasis can result in abdominal pain, diarrhoea and blood in the stool.
- Urogenital schistosomiasis can result in blood in the urine. Fibrosis of the bladder and ureter, and kidney damage can be seen in advanced cases.

How is schistosomiasis diagnosed?

Depending on the geographical location of your travel, urine or stool pathology can be ordered. Blood samples can also be taken, but you must wait at least 6-8 weeks after exposure to the freshwater.

What is the treatment of schistosomiasis?

If you have travelled to areas where schistosomiasis is present and you have had contact with freshwater, see your health care provider. There is medication that you can take to treat this infestation. This medication is called praziquantal.

Reference

Centres for disease control and prevention, 2012, Atlanta GA, viewed 16th April 2014, <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/schistosomiasis/gen_info/faqs.html>

World Health Organisation, 2014, Geneva Switzerland, viewed 16th April 2014, <<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs115/en/>>