

Trainers Guide

Bilharzia (Schistosomiasis)

Transmission: The Life Cycle

1. The medical name for 'Bilharzia' is *Schistosomiasis*. It is common in all low-lying areas in Africa, where people use water from slow moving water in rivers or dams.
2. A person who has bilharzia has parasitic worms in the intestine.
3. These worms lay eggs which are excreted with the urine or faeces. This is accompanied by blood in the urine or faeces, which is one of the signs of bilharzia.
4. If the urine or faeces are deposited on the ground near water, the eggs can get washed into a river or dam when it rains.
5. When the eggs reach water, they hatch into small worms. In order to survive, these worms must find a certain type of snail within days.
6. The worms occupy the snails and then leave them to find a human host.
7. People come to the river to swim, wash, collect water, etc. and the worms burrow into their skin, and travelling in the blood vessels they make their way to the intestine again to lay eggs.

Symptoms:

1. Blood in urine
2. Blood in faeces
3. Continual tiredness and lack of energy, lethargy at work/ school
4. Ache in the lower back

Prevention:

1. When the parasites are already in the human body, we have to take medicine to kill them and stop the eggs being laid, and further spreading the disease.
2. We can stop the eggs being washing into water sources by either burying our faeces (cat sanitation) or using a latrine.
3. We can stop the snails from breeding by spraying the breeding sites in rivers and dams.
4. We can avoid contact with water that has bilharzia snails.

Treatment/Cure:

1. Bilharzia is easily diagnosed by testing the urine or the faeces.
2. Once this is found to be positive a course of medication is taken.
3. Bilharzia will reoccur if the patient returns to bilharzia-infested water.
4. It can be prevented by avoiding contaminated water.
5. It cannot be spread from one person to another without the full cycle.