

Ascariasis



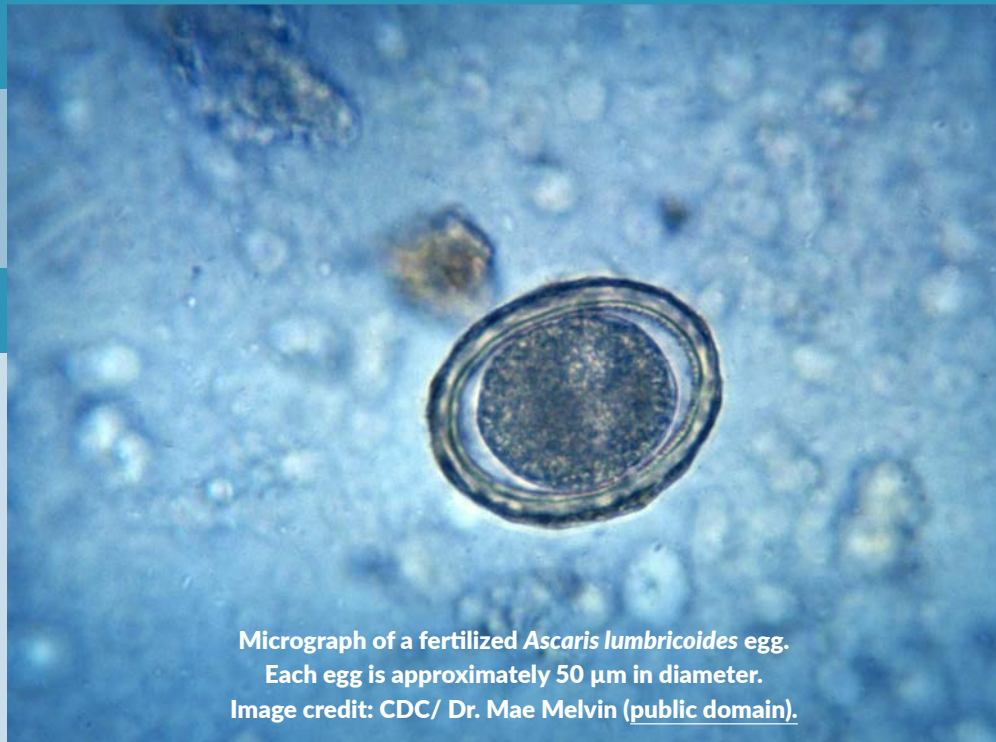
Distribution

Found worldwide, especially in tropical and subtropical regions. Ascariasis causes around 60,000 deaths per year (WHO, 2018).



Cause

Consuming water or food contaminated with eggs of the roundworm (helminth) *Ascaris lumbricoides*. *Ascaris* eggs enter the environment from people's feces due to poor sanitation and hygiene practices. Eggs can survive in the soil for months or years. Children can become infected by putting hands in their mouths after playing in contaminated soil.



Micrograph of a fertilized *Ascaris lumbricoides* egg. Each egg is approximately 50 μm in diameter. Image credit: CDC/ Dr. Mae Melvin (public domain).



Symptoms

After eggs hatch inside a person, larvae move through the person's body, eventually maturing into adult worms in the person's intestines. Symptoms may include live worms in feces, abdominal pain, coughing, and fever.

Some infected people do not experience symptoms, but their feces can still make others sick.

Infection is often more serious in children with poor nutrition.



Prevention

- Avoid contact with soil that may be contaminated.
- Use improved latrines to keep feces from the environment.
- Treat fecal sludge properly before using as a soil amendment.
- Treat and safely store all drinking water.
- Use good hygiene, including hand-washing with soap at all critical times.
- Wash fruits and vegetables in safe drinking water; cook food thoroughly.

HOUSEHOLD WATER TREATMENT OPTIONS

- Filters that are rated "very effective" for helminths.
- Boiling inactivates *Ascaris* eggs.
- Note: *Ascaris* eggs are resistant to chlorine.



Treatment

Treat with a variety of antibiotics. In at-risk communities, treat vulnerable groups regularly.