

## SCHISTOSOMIASIS

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### ABSTRACT

Schistosomes are water-borne flatworms or blood flukes that enter the human body through the skin. Individuals who have been exposed to fresh or salt water may develop a pruritic rash due to cercarial dermatitis (also called swimmer's itch). Patients with acute schistosomiasis (Katayama fever) present usually 4-8 weeks after contact with infested water.. The body's reaction to the eggs produces by these worms and not the worms themselves cause the symptoms of schistosomiasis. Within days after becoming infected, some people have rash or itchy skin, and within a month or two they may have fever, chills, cough and muscle aches. Usually the eggs of the parasite go to the liver or pass into the intestine or urinary bladder. Rarely, eggs are found in the brain or spinal cord and cause seizures, paralysis, or spinal cord inflammation. After many years of repeated infection, the parasite can damage the liver, intestines, lungs or urinary bladder. Even without treatment, damage to these organs occurs only rarely in people such as travelers who have relatively short period of exposure and who avoid reinfection. Persons who live in or travel to areas where schistosomiasis occurs and who have skin contact with fresh water (rivers, streams or lakes) are at risk of getting Ultimately, patients develop hepatosplenomegaly, ascites, and lymphadenopathy. Schistosomes are parasitic worms that are a prime example of a complex multicellular pathogen that flourishes in the human host despite the development of a pronounced immune response. The transmission of schistosomiasis is spatially and temporally restricted to freshwater bodies that contain schistosome cercariae released from specific snails that act as intermediate hosts. Antischistosomal drugs inhibit egg-laying by adult worms. Therefore, patients' stool and urine should be tested for 6 months after treatment. Treatment is repeated for those excreting eggs. If symptoms recur, hematuria occurs, or eosinophilia is noted, repeat parasite investigation should be performed. However, serology can remain positive for years.

**KEYWORDS:** Schistosomiasis, Lymphadenopathy, *Schistosome cercariae*, Cercarial Dermatitis, *Eosinophilia*