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Strongyloidiasis: An overview

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Strongyloidiasis, also named as dwarf thread worm is caused by Strongyloides stercoralis. It is the smallest pathogenic nematode to cause infection in man. It is an ovoviviparous nematode. The filariform larvae are the infective stages of the parasite. Transmission occurs mainly in tropical and subtropical regions but also in countries with temperate climates. In India it is increasingly reported from states of Andhra Pradesh, North eastern states, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and other parts of India. The soil contaminated with human faeces is the main source of infection for humans. Man acquires infection mainly by penetration of the skin by filariform larvae. It is also caused by ingestion of food and drinks contaminated with larvae (oral transmission). Rate of infection is very high in immunecompromised patient which reduces the resistance of the body, leading to an extensive tissue invasion by the adult worm. Pulmonary manifestations like pneumonitis, bronchopneumonia, dyspnoea, wheezing and intestinal manifestations like profuse watery diarrhoea, abdominal pain, indigestion, nausea and vomiting is seen in strongyloidiasis. The infection can be prevented through good personal hygiene. It can be diagnosed and confirmed by serological tests, skin tests and imaging techniques. The most common methods of diagnosis are microscopic examinations of duodenal or stool samples. No vaccine or preventative drugs are available. Important control measures should be taken which includes sanitary disposal of faeces, improved personal hygiene. Routine examination of stool samples for parasites can significantly benefit both infected and uninfected immunocompromised individuals by contributing to reduce morbidity and improved quality of life.

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