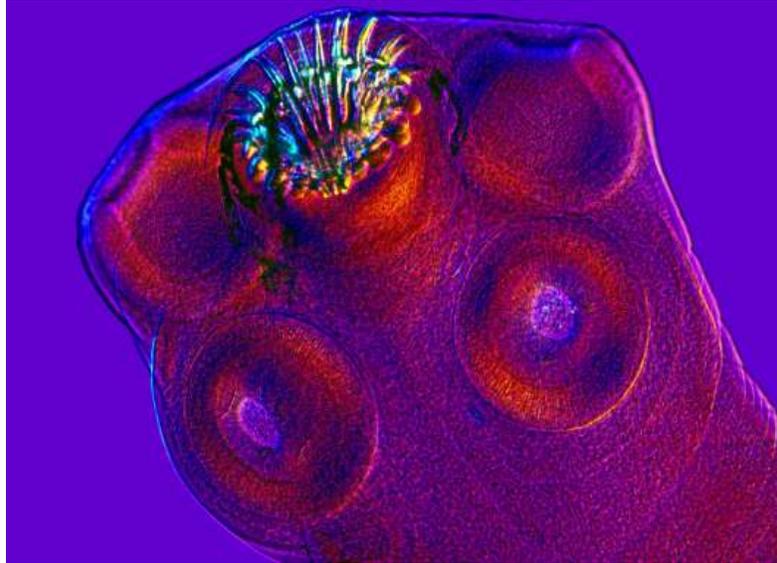


Worst parasites in the world



Pork tapeworm

Eating a slice of bacon or a pork taco is a common way to accidentally ingest a taenia solium, or pork tapeworm. While about 4,000 types of tapeworm inhabit the world, the pork tapeworm is especially common in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Infection with pork tapeworms can cause a seizure-inducing disease called cysticercosis.



Schistosome

Commonly known as blood flukes, these parasites live in freshwater snails – until they find their way into hosts' veins where they wreak havoc on livers. The World Health Organization holds

these guys responsible for the second most socioeconomically devastating parasitic disease after malaria. Worldwide, more than 200 million humans are infected with schistosomiasis.



Whipworms

This little whip-shaped parasite loves warm weather and moisture, so it thrives in Southeast Asia, the American South, parts of Africa and the human colon. Children are especially at risk. While whipworms can cause some very unpleasant effects on the posterior, researchers are studying their use to help people suffering from Crohn's Disease, multiple sclerosis, inflammatory bowel disease and ulcerative colitis.



While Ebola currently grabs the headlines, parasites impact millions of people around the world, year in and year out. In fact, the number one parasitic disease kills about a million people annually.

Plasmodium parasites

Four different types of plasmodium parasite carried by mosquitoes cause malaria in humans, which kills more than 1 million people annually. Since the case will be worse if the parasite is more developed, places with the longest-lived mosquitoes pose the greatest danger.



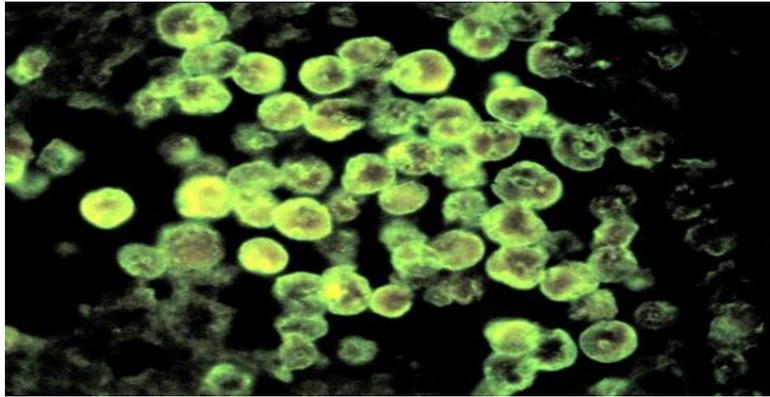
Anisakis

If you feel a tingle in your esophagus after eating raw squid or fish, it might be a little anisakis nematode walking around. What starts out in an infected sea lion or whale works its way through the food chain and winds up as an inflamed mass in your digestive tract, a condition known as anisakiasis



Maggots

Most of us have seen maggots, or fly larvae, in old meat. But an infestation of this parasite can happen in your living flesh, too, especially in South America or Africa, in a condition known as myiasis. Avoid traveling with open wounds.



Naegleria fowleri

If you drink water infected with this “brain-eating amoeba,” no need to worry. But get it up your nose and you can develop a rare and usually fatal brain disease. This parasite thrives in warm freshwater, such as rivers, lakes and hot springs. An infection caused by this dangerous amoeba is called primary amoebic meningoencephalitis.



Guinea worm

This tiny parasite starts out its life living inside a water flea. But once a person accidentally swallows it in contaminated drinking water, it lodges in their innards and grows to be several feet long in a condition known as guinea worm disease. Eventually it burrows outward, popping through the victim's skin. An eradication program has decreased incidence from 3.5 million annual cases in the mid-1980s to only 542 in 2012.



Hookworms

Most people who ingest hookworms through unclean produce or water feel no symptoms until late-stage infestation. The tiny worm attaches to the intestinal wall, drinking the host's blood. Hookworms are especially widespread in China and can cause anemia.



Sand flies

When a phlebotomine sand fly bites a person, the parasites it carries cause a nasty infection at the bite site called leishmaniasis. Or, worse, they can cause a visceral infection that damages the liver, spleen and bone marrow. These sand flies live in the subtropics, tropics and southern Europe.



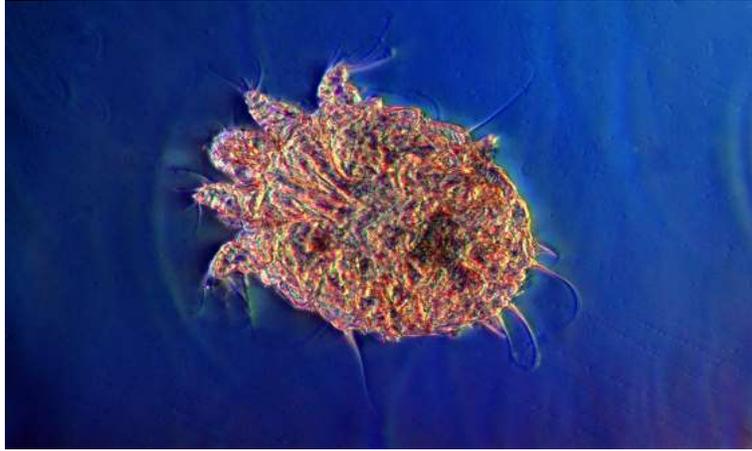
Roundworm

This ubiquitous parasite is adapted to all environments, making it the most common parasite found in humans. Growing to more than a foot long, it's also one of the biggest. One-sixth of humans are infected by roundworms in a condition called ascariasis, which is spread mainly through contaminated food.



Screwworm fly

This parasite's Latin name translates to "eater of man." Transported by the screwworm fly, the *cochliomyia hominivorax* parasite's jaws can drill through nerves and bones, causing great pain and deadly abscesses. In one case, doctors in Connecticut used raw bacon to lure 142 larvae back out of a 12-year-old girl's scalp. The girl contracted this parasite while visiting Colombia.



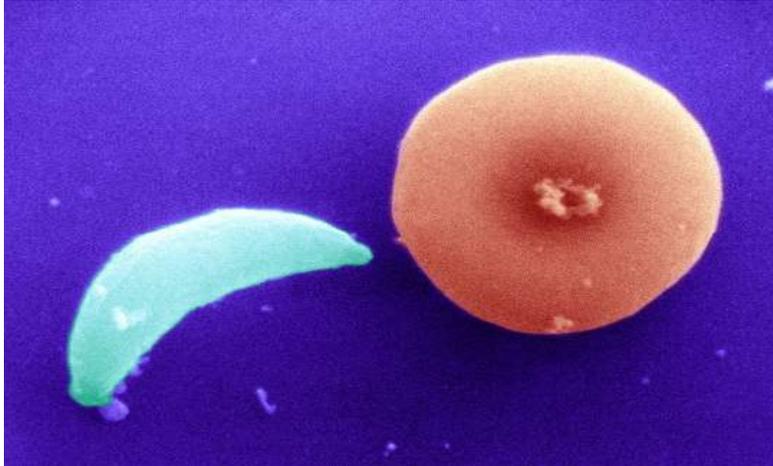
Human itch mite

When this pregnant female parasite burrows into your skin and lays her eggs, you become mighty itchy. The human itch mite spreads rapidly in close quarters. Prisons and nursing homes are especially susceptible to scabies infestation.



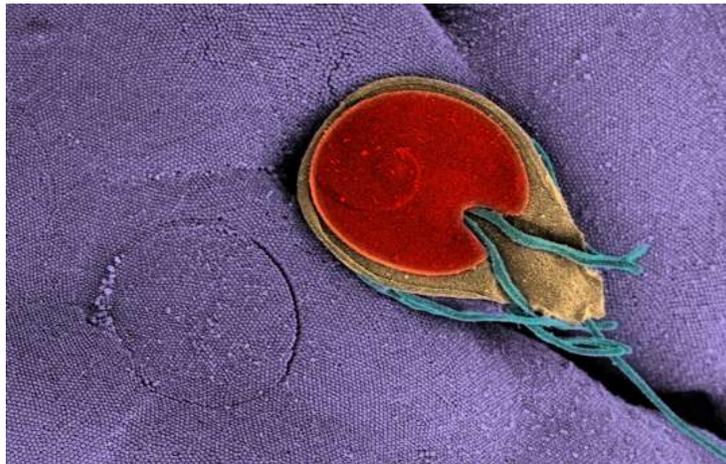
Chigoe flea

Hikers and berry pickers may unwittingly pick up these little hitchhikers, also known as chiggers. While these tiny members of the arachnid family are most likely to attach to your feet and ankles, they will happily infest any part of you that comes in contact with tall grasses. These parasites are not nearly as dangerous or disgusting as many others, but the itching can feel unbearable.



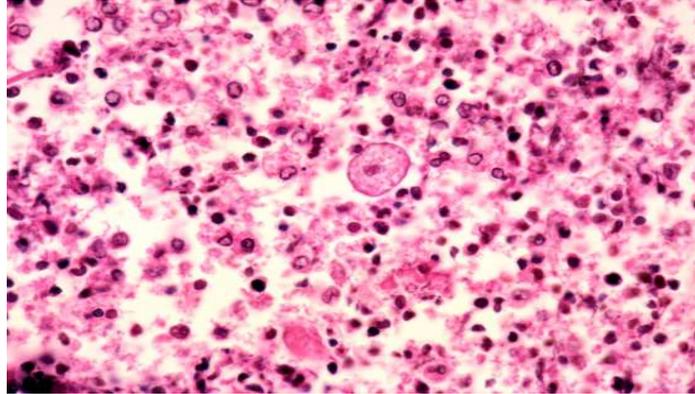
Toxoplasma gondii

Cat owners beware: this parasite reproduces only inside cats' guts. It's so tricky and adaptive that infected rats lose their fear of cat urine, thus becoming more likely to be eaten by cats where they can multiply. Most mammals can become infected. Carried through the bloodstream, it damages your brain, eyes, heart and other organs in a condition known as toxoplasmosis.



Giardia lamblia

More than 20,000 people in the U.S. come down with diarrhea and abdominal pain every year, thanks to this parasite. It's transferred through contaminated food, water and soil. Unfortunately for people, this parasite survives chlorine disinfection, so swimming pools are not immune.



Entamoeba histolytica

Humans and other primates are the victims of entamoeba histolytica, which likes to make its home in the colon and is spread through feces. Occasionally it causes liver abscesses. All people are targets for this parasite, but the results are especially severe for people with compromised immune systems, such as AIDS patients.



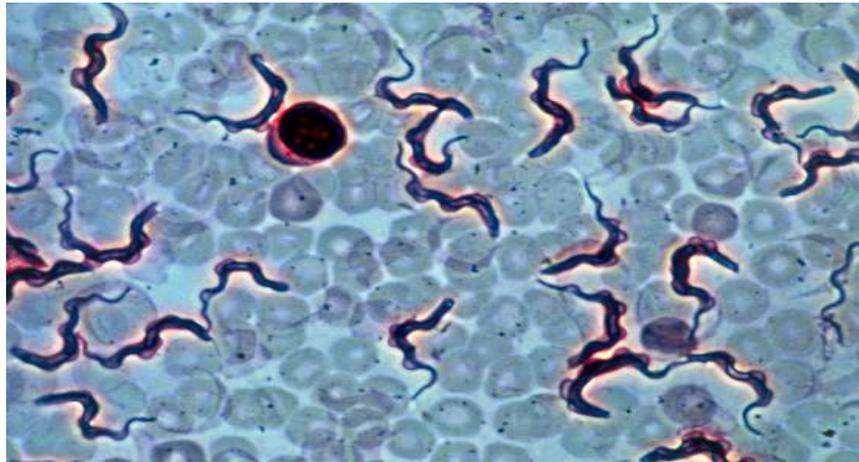
Pinworm

Pinworms are an extremely common type of roundworm infection, especially in children. They don't cause lasting harm, but are difficult to eradicate. They can live outside the body on surfaces like toys, towels, pajamas and desks for two to three weeks, easily being transferred onto other little fingers and into little mouths.



Loa loa eye worm

This parasite from central and western Africa can migrate through your tissues for more than a decade. That's ten years after the mango or deer fly carrying the little worm first bit you. It's bad enough that you might feel it creeping through and inflaming your tissues, damaging your retina and nervous system. But it can also cause encephalopathy in your brain, which affects personality and cognition.



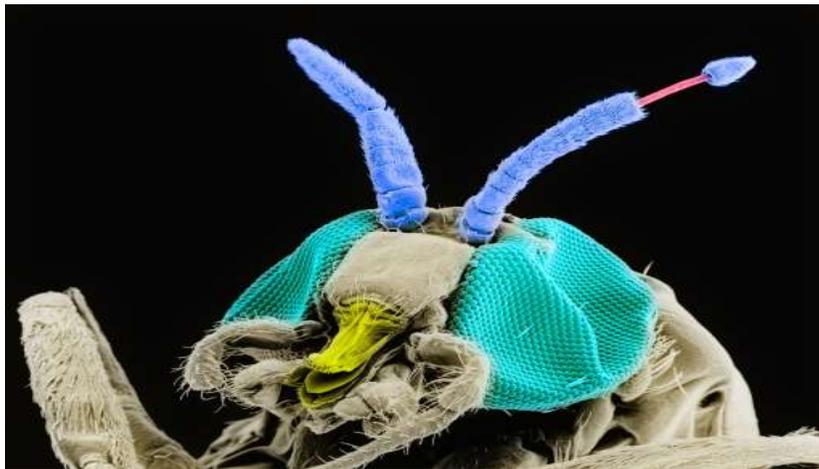
Trypanosoma brucei

When a tsetse fly bites a person in rural Africa, the microscopic parasite it carries can cause confusion, personality change and extreme fatigue in the unfortunate victim. And those are the more benign symptoms. About 10,000 new cases of African trypanosomiasis, or sleeping sickness, are reported annually, with many more probably going undiagnosed. If not treated with medication, this disease is fatal.



Trypanosoma cruzi

Latin Americans who live in straw, mud, adobe and palm thatch houses are especially at risk to develop this disease. Triatomine bugs hide in the roofs and walls during the day. While people sleep at night, they sneak out, ingest a victim's blood, then defecate, causing a condition known as Chagas disease. If the bug's feces enters a mucus membrane, the person becomes infected. These bugs are also called "kissing bugs" because they favor feeding on faces.



Onchocerca volvulus

Blackflies that breed near rivers and streams carry this parasitic worm. Repeated bites can lead to nodules under the skin, dreadful itching and, ultimately, blindness. These parasites infect people in diverse parts of the world, including Africa, Yemen, Mexico, Central and South America. Approximately 300,000 people have lost their vision to this parasite.



Paragonimus

This type of flatworm is ingested by people in undercooked crayfish and crabs. Most victims are in Asia, Africa, Central and South America. But some people have been infected while on river rafting trips in the American Midwest. Symptoms can be similar to tuberculosis –such as coughing up blood – plus abdominal pain and diarrhea. The condition becomes very serious if the lung fluke travels to the central nervous system.