

# Taenia solium

**Neurocysticercosis**: intracranial encystment of larva of **Taenia solium** (pork tapeworm).

*Taenia solium* is the pork tapeworm belonging to cyclophyllid cestodes in the family Taeniidae. It is an intestinal zoonotic parasite found throughout the world, and is most prevalent in countries where pork is eaten. The adult worm is found in humans and has a flat, ribbon-like body, which is white in color and measures 2 to 3 m in length. Its distinct head, the scolex, contains suckers and a rostellum as organs of attachment. The main body, the strobila, consists of a chain of segments known as proglottids. Each proglottid is a complete reproductive unit; hence, the tapeworm is a hermaphrodite. It completes its life cycle in humans as the definitive host and pigs as intermediate host. It is transmitted to pigs through human faeces or contaminated fodder, and to humans through uncooked or undercooked pork. Pigs ingest embryonated eggs, morula, which develop into larvae, the oncospheres, and ultimately into infective larvae, cysticerci. A cysticercus grows into an adult worm in human small intestines. Infection is generally harmless and asymptomatic. However, accidental infection in humans by the larval stage causes **cysticercosis**. The most severe form is neurocysticercosis, which affects the brain and is a major cause of epilepsy.

Human infection is diagnosed by the parasite eggs in the faeces. For complicated cysticercosis, imaging techniques such as computed tomography and nuclear magnetic resonance are employed. Blood samples can also be tested using antibody reaction of enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay. Broad-spectrum anthelmintics such as praziquantel and albendazole are the most effective medications.

see **Cysticercosis**.

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Last update: **2024/06/07 02:58**

