

Check your understanding



1 What is the difference between a definitive and an intermediate host of a parasite?

Answer [The definitive host harbors the productive mature (adult) form of the parasite and the intermediate host harbors the immature form (larvae).]

2 How do humans get infected with snail fever?

Answer [Through direct contact with freshwater (which contains the parasite). The snails in the freshwater are the ones who harbor the infective larval stage of the schistosomes. The snails release the schistosomes into the water and from there they can enter the human body through the skin.]

3 How can you protect yourself from snail fever?

Answer [Avoid contact with freshwater in areas where you know snail fever is present. Before taking a shower or washing your clothes, boil the water to kill any parasites in it.]

4 If rodents also harbor and transmit schistosomes to humans, would mass drug administration (MDA) be an effective method to stop snail fever?

Answer [MDA currently only targets the human population, so people will get better for a certain time. The rodents on the other hand will continue to harbor the parasites, so once the course of drugs has finished, the disease is likely to re-emerge as the rodents re-transmit it to people.]