

Name _____

The Amoeba

(modified from The Biology Corner - Worksheets and Lessons)

The **amoeba** is a protozoan that belongs to the **Kingdom Protista**. The name amoeba comes from the Greek word amoibe, which means change. Protists are microscopic one-celled organisms that don't fit into the other kingdoms. The amoeba is an animal-like protist because it moves and consumes its food (consumer). The amoeba has an unusual way of creeping along by stretching its cytoplasm into fingerlike extensions called **pseudopodia**. (The word "pseudopodia" means "false foot".) Its **cell membrane** is very flexible and allows for the amoeba to change shape. Amoeba live in ponds or puddles, and can even live inside people.

By pushing the cytoplasm toward the cell membrane, the amoeba causes its body to extend and creep along. It is also by this method that the amoeba consumes its food. The pseudopodia extend out and wrap around a food particle in a process called **phagocytosis**. The food is then engulfed into the amoeba and digested. As the food is digested it exists in a structure called a **food vacuole**.

Amoebas can cause disease. A common disease caused by the amoeba is called **Amoebic Dysentery**. A person becomes infected by drinking contaminated water. The amoeba then upsets the person's digestive system and causes cramps and diarrhea. A person is most likely to be infected in countries where the water is not filtered or purified.

Questions

1. How does an amoeba move?
2. Fingerlike extensions of the amoeba's cytoplasm are called ...?
3. What disease is caused by the amoeba?
4. To what Kingdom does the amoeba belong?