

PINWORMS

PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

What are Pinworms?

Pinworm disease is a condition caused by parasitic worms that invade and live in the intestine. The disease is very common and can affect anyone. It is found most often in preschool and school-aged children, in primary care givers for infected children, and in institutionalized people.

How are they spread?

Pinworms are spread by direct transfer of infective eggs by hand from anus to mouth of the same or another person, or indirectly through clothing, bedding, toys or other articles contaminated with parasite eggs. Pinworm eggs are infective within a few hours after being deposited on the skin. They can survive up to two weeks on clothing, bedding or objects. Since pinworms are so small, they can become airborne and ingested while breathing.

How are they treated?

See your physician for diagnosis and treatment recommendations. Treatment involves a two-dose course. The second dose should be given two weeks after the first. Medication may not only be prescribed for the infected person, but for other household members and caregivers as well.

How can we prevent Pinworms?

- Wash hands well with soap and water before food preparation, before eating, after going to the bathroom or changing diapers.
- Keep fingernails short. Keep fingers out of mouth and discourage nail biting as well as scratching of the anal area. These practices help reduce the risk of continuous self reinfection.
- Bathe when you wake up to reduce egg contamination.
- Change and launder underwear each day. Frequent changing of night clothes is also recommended.
- Change underwear, night clothes and sheets after each treatment. Linens and clothing should be handled without shaking, since shaking can spread the eggs into the air. Launder sheets and clothing in hot soapy water.

SYMPTOMS OF PINWORMS

- Irritability
- Anal itching
- Difficulty sleeping at night
- White threadlike worms near the anus may be found at night

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