**Pinworms**

Pinworm is an intestinal infection caused by tiny parasitic worms. It's a common infection that affects millions of people each year, particularly school-age kids.

If your child develops a pinworm infection, try not to worry. Pinworms don't cause any harm (just itching and restless sleep), and it won't take long to get rid of them.

**How Do Pinworm Infections Spread?**

Pinworm infections (also known as "seatworm infection" or "threadworm infection") are contagious.

Pinworms get into the body when people ingest or breathe in the microscopic pinworm eggs. These eggs can be found on contaminated hands and surfaces, such as:

•bed linens

•towels

•clothing (especially underwear and pyjamas)

•toilets

•bathroom fixtures

•food

•drinking glasses

•eating utensils

•toys

•kitchen counters

•desks or lunch tables at school

•sandboxes

The eggs pass into the digestive system and hatch in the small intestine. From the small intestine, pinworm larvae go to the large intestine, where they live as parasites (with their heads attached to the inside wall of the bowel).

About 1 to 2 months later, adult female pinworms travel from the large intestine to the area around the rectum. There, they will lay new pinworm eggs, which trigger itching around the anus.

When someone scratches the itchy area, microscopic pinworm eggs transfer to their fingers. Contaminated fingers can then carry pinworm eggs to the mouth, where they go back into the body, or stay on various surfaces, where they can live for 2 to 3 weeks.

If you're wondering if your family pet could give your child a pinworm infection, it can't. Pinworms don't come from animals.

**What Are the Signs and Symptoms of Pinworm Infection?**

The most common signs of a pinworm infection are itching around the rectum and restless sleep. The itching is usually worse at night because the worms move to the area around the rectum to lay their eggs. In girls, pinworm infection can spread to the vagina and cause a vaginal discharge. If the itching leads to broken skin, it can also lead to a bacterial skin infection.

If your child has a pinworm infection, you can see worms in the anal region, especially if you look about 2 or 3 hours after your child has fallen asleep. You also might see the worms in the toilet after your child goes to the bathroom. They look like tiny pieces of white thread and are really small — about as long as a staple. You might also see them on your child's underwear in the morning.

Abdominal pain and nausea are less common symptoms but can happen if there are many pinworms in the intestines.

**How Are Pinworm Infections Diagnosed?**

Your doctor may ask you to help make the diagnosis of pinworm by placing a sticky piece of clear cellophane tape against your child's rectum. Pinworm eggs will stick to the tape and can be seen under a microscope in a laboratory.

The best time to take a sample of eggs using tape is at night or in the morning before a bath (when there is the most pinworm activity around the rectum). The doctor also might take some samples from under a child's fingernails to look for eggs.

**How Are Pinworm Infections Treated?**

If your child has a pinworm infection, the doctor will recommend an over-the-counter or prescription antiworm medicine. This is given in one dose and repeated in 2 weeks. The doctor may decide to treat the entire family, especially if your child has had a pinworm infection before.

Although medicine takes care of the worm infection, the itching may continue for about a week. So the doctor also might give your child a cream or other medicine to help stop the itching.

Regular hand washing and routine household cleaning (including frequent changing of underwear, and washing everyone's pyjamas, towels, and bed linens) also will help prevent the spread of a pinworm infection within the family.

**Can Pinworm Infections Be Prevented?**

Here are a few ways to prevent pinworm infections in your family:

•Remind kids to wash their hands often, especially after using the toilet, after playing outside, and before eating.

•Make sure your kids shower or bathe every day and change underwear and swimsuits daily.

•Keep kids' fingernails short and clean.

•Tell kids not to scratch around their bottom or bite their nails.

•Wash your kids' pyjamas every few days.

**When Should I Call the Doctor?**

Call the doctor if your child complains of itchy skin or always seems to be scratching the anal or vaginal area.

Also ask about whether pinworms could be to blame if your child has trouble sleeping or has begun to wet the bed. (Pinworms can irritate the urethra — the channel through which pee leaves the bladder and exits the body — and lead to bedwetting.)

Remember that pinworms are quite common among kids and aren't harmful. By taking medicine and following some prevention tips, you'll be rid of the worms in no time.

**What is a pinworm infection?**

1) pinworm infection is an extremely common infection in which tiny worms infest the intestines and lay eggs around the anus.

2) combination of medication, a thorough cleansing of your household, and vigilant personal hygiene can get rid of a pinworm infestation in your house.

3) pinworm infections are highly contagious, therefore all members of your household should be treated for an infection simultaneously to avoid a recurrence.

A pinworm infection is one of the most common types of human intestinal worm infections. Pinworms are tiny, narrow worms. They’re white in colour and less than half an inch long. A pinworm infection, also known as enterobiasis or oxyuriasis, is the most common type of worm infection in humans in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Pinworm infections can spread easily. They’re most common in children between the ages of 5 and 10, people who live in institutions, and those who have regular, close contact with individuals in these groups. An effective treatment for pinworm infections is medication, though reinfection is possible. Serious complications and long-term health effects are rare.

**Causes**

**What causes a pinworm infection?**

Pinworms infections are highly contagious. You become infected with pinworms by unintentionally ingesting (or inhaling) pinworm eggs, usually deposited by an infected person onto an object. The cycle of infection begins with the ingestion of these microscopic eggs.

Once the eggs enter your body, they remain in the intestine until they hatch and mature. As adults, the female pinworms move into the colon and exit the body through the anus. Female pinworms lay eggs in the folds of skin around the anus. The presence of these eggs often causes anal itching and irritation.

When a person scratches the affected area, the pinworm eggs transfer to the fingers. The eggs can survive for several hours on your hands. If the infected person touches bedding, clothing, toilet seats, toys, or other household objects, the eggs transfer to these objects. Pinworm eggs can survive on these contaminated surfaces for up to three weeks.

Children transfer pinworm eggs easily because they may put infected toys or other objects directly into their mouths. The eggs can also transfer from contaminated fingers directly to food or liquids. While uncommon, it’s also possible for adults to inhale airborne eggs when shaking contaminated bedding, towels, or clothing.

**Risk Factors**

Who is at risk for a pinworm infection?

Pinworm infections affect people of all ages and geographical regions. Since the pinworm eggs are microscopic, it’s impossible to avoid infected individuals or areas.

While anyone can get a pinworm infection, the following groups are more susceptible:

•children who attend day care, preschool, or elementary school

•family members or caregivers of infected children and adults

•individuals who live in institutions or other crowded accommodations

•children or adults who don’t practice regular and careful hand-washing prior to eating

•children who have a habit of sucking their thumbs

**What are the symptoms of a pinworm infection?**

Some individuals with pinworm infections may not experience any symptoms. However, you may suspect that you or your child has a pinworm infection if you notice:

•frequent and strong itching of the anal area

•restless sleep due to itching and discomfort of anal area

•pain, rash, or other skin irritation around the anus

•presence of pinworms in the area of your child’s anus

•presence of pinworms in stools

**Diagnosis**

How is a pinworm infection diagnosed?

A tape test is the most reliable method for diagnosing a pinworm infection. A tape test consists of taking a piece of cellophane tape and pressing the sticky, adhesive side against the skin around the anus. Since pinworms often exit the anus while the infected person sleeps, you should conduct a tape test upon waking in the morning. If eggs are present, they will stick to the tape. Take the tape to your doctor, who can place it on a slide and examine it under a microscope to see if it contains pinworm eggs.

Routine morning activities, such as bathing or using the toilet, can remove eggs from your skin, so the results of a tape test are most accurate if you perform the test when you first wake up. The CDC recommends that you conduct a tape test at least three times, on three consecutive mornings, to increase your likelihood of finding pinworm eggs.

**Treatment**

What are the treatment options for a pinworm infection?

**Medication**

Your doctor can usually treat a pinworm infection effectively with oral medication. Since pinworms pass so easily from one person to another, everyone living in the household of an infected person usually needs treatment at the same time to prevent reinfection. Caregivers and others who have close, personal contact with the individual also receive treatment.

The most common and effective medications to treat pinworm infection are:

•mebendazole

•albendazole (Albenza)

•pyrantel pamoate

One course of medication usually involves an initial dose, followed by a second dose two to three weeks later. More than one course may be necessary to fully eliminate the pinworm eggs. Creams or ointments can soothe itching skin in the area around the anus.

**Clearing Your Home of Pinworms**

 In addition to medication, a specific regimen of hygiene and household cleaning can help you completely eliminate the pinworm eggs. This regimen is below.

•Ensure that the infected person and other household members practice thorough hand-washing with warm water and soap, especially before eating.

•Encourage everyone in the household to shower and change their underwear every morning.

•Clean everyone’s fingernails and cut them short.

•Instruct the infected person and others to stop biting their nails.

•Tell the infected person to refrain from scratching the anal area.

•Use hot water to launder all bedding, towels, washcloths, and clothing in the affected house. Dry these items using high heat.

•Avoid shaking clothing and bedding to keep pinworm eggs from spreading into the air.

•Don’t allow children to bathe together, as this can cause pinworm eggs to spread in the bath water.

•Thoroughly clean any surfaces that may be infected, including toys, floors, countertops, and toilet seats.

•Carefully vacuum all carpeted areas.

Humans are the only pinworm hosts. Your cat or dog can’t infect you or be infected with pinworms. It’s not necessary to treat your pets for the infection.

**Complications**

What are the complications associated with a pinworm infection?

Most people don’t experience serious complications as a result of pinworm infections. Rarely, if the infestation is left untreated, pinworm infections can sometimes cause a urinary tract infection in women. Pinworms can also travel from the anus into the vagina, affecting the uterus, fallopian tubes, and other pelvic organs. Vaginitis, endometritis (an inflammation of the uterine lining), or other infections may result.

The presence of a significant number of pinworms can cause abdominal pain.

Substantial pinworm populations can rob your body of essential nutrients, which can cause weight loss.

**How can I prevent a pinworm infection?**

The best way to prevent pinworm infections and reinfections is to follow recommended hygiene routines and encourage other household members, especially children, to do the same. You can work to prevent pinworm infections with several practices, including:

•Wash your hands with warm water and soap after using the toilet. Be especially careful after bowel movements and changing diapers. Do the same before preparing food and eating. This is the BEST mode of prevention.

•Keep your fingernails short and clean.

•Discourage habits such as nail biting or scratching that could spread pinworm eggs.

•Shower daily in the morning to remove pinworm eggs that may have been deposited overnight.

•Change your underwear and clothing daily.

•Use hot water in the washing machine, followed by a hot dryer, to launder bedding, clothing, and towels that may contain pinworm eggs.

•Keep rooms well lit during the day because the eggs are sensitive to sunlight.

**What is the long-term outlook?**

It’s possible to eradicate a pinworm infection with medication and the recommended cleaning regimen. However, because pinworm eggs are invisible to the naked eye and are highly contagious, reinfection can easily occur. A person can reinfect themselves or become reinfected by eggs from another person. If you experience recurrent infections after you have treated your household, individuals and locations outside of the household may be the primary source of the pinworm eggs.

<http://www.healthline.com/health/pinworms#complications7>

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