

PINWORMS

Pinworms are the most common intestinal worm infection in the U.S. They are most often found in pre-school and school-aged children and their parents. These small worms are found in the human intestine and crawl out of the rectum at night to lay eggs.

CAUSE: *Enterobius vermicularis*, an internal parasite, a roundworm

SYMPTOMS: Rectal (bottom) itching, especially at night; irritability; disturbed sleep, grinding of teeth at night, weight loss, nighttime bedwetting.

SPREAD: Pinworm eggs are taken into the mouth when a person fails to wash hands well after scratching the rectal area, using the toilet, or handling contaminated pajamas, underwear, or bedding. Food or other items can be contaminated the same way.

INCUBATION: It takes 2 to 6 weeks from the time a person is exposed until symptoms occur.

CONTAGIOUS PERIOD: As long as eggs are present. Eggs can remain infective outside the body for about 2 weeks.



Until 24 hours after treatment has been started.



1. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and running water for at least 20 seconds after using the toilet, changing diapers, after contact with the rectal area, and before eating or preparing food. Thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent spread of infectious diseases found in the intestinal tract. Parent/guardians and child care providers should closely monitor handwashing of all children after bathroom use or diapering. If hand sanitizers are used, they may be used only after thorough handwashing.
2. Avoid scratching or touching bare rectal area, or biting nails. Keep nails short.
3. For several days after treatment:
 - a. bathe every morning (shower preferred), using a clean washcloth and towel, followed by a clean change of underclothing
 - b. change bedding and clothing daily and wash in hot water
 - c. clean and vacuum house daily

4. **Diagnosis:** You may see the worms (upon waking) around the rectum or in the stool. If you suspect pinworms, contact your physician. He/she may advise examining and treating the whole family.
5. **Treatment:** Your physician can prescribe the proper medication, which is given once and repeated in two weeks. Families should be aware that recurrence is common.



For more information, you or your physician may call the Douglas County Health Department at 444-7214 or your local health department.