

Pinworms

Pinworms are tiny, white thread-like worms that live in the intestines. The worms crawl out of the anus at night and lay their eggs on nearby skin. Pinworms are a nuisance, not a serious disease. They are very common in children and spread easily among children and staff in child care facilities.

What are the symptoms of pinworms?

Most children that get pinworms do not have any other symptoms. Some may get a lot of itching around the anus and girls may get itching around the vagina. If the infection is severe they may have disturbed sleep and irritability.

How are pinworms spread?

They can be spread directly (when an infected child scratches the itchy area and transfers eggs to their own or another child's mouth), or indirectly (by contaminated hands or objects, such as shared toys). Eggs can be picked up on the hands of others and ingested. Pinworms can be found in the clothes and bed linens shared with an infected child or adult.

How long are pinworms contagious?

As long as they are present. The eggs can survive for up to 3 weeks outside the body, on clothing, bedding or other objects.

How are pinworms treated?

A physician can do a simple test to check for pinworms. They are treated with prescribed medication that is usually given in single doses 2 weeks apart. However, treatment doesn't prevent a new infestation if the child is re-exposed to other infested children.

More to know

- Control of pinworms is difficult because the rate of re-infestation is high
- If an outbreak persists, it may be necessary to treat all members of a child care facility at once, and possibly their families
- Promptly launder linens and change bedding of infected person
- Because the eggs are sensitive to sunlight, open blinds or curtains in bedrooms/sleeping areas during the day
- Children with pinworms can continue to attend daycare



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