



Pinworms

What are pinworms?

Small, white, threadlike worms (0.25–0.5" long) that live in the large intestine

What are the signs or symptoms?

- Most people have no signs or symptoms.
- Itching and irritation around the anal or vaginal area.

What are the incubation and contagious periods?

- Incubation period: 1 to 2 months or longer from the time of ingesting the pinworm egg until an adult worm migrates to the anal area
- Contagious period: As long as the female worms are discharging eggs to the skin around the anus

How are they spread?

- Fecal-oral route: Contact with feces of children who are infected. This generally involves an infected child contaminating their own fingers and then touching an object that another child touches. The child who touched the contaminated surface then puts their fingers into their own mouth or another person's mouth.
- By sharing toys, bedding, clothing, toilet seats, or baths. The eggs are light and float in the air.
- Pinworm eggs remain infective for 2 to 3 weeks in indoor environments.
- Infestation with pinworms commonly clusters within families.

How do you control them?

- Use good hand-hygiene technique at all the times listed in Chapter 2.
- Keep the child's fingernails short.
- Treatment with oral medication once or repeated in 2 weeks may be necessary for the whole family and the group of children who share a common environment.

What are the roles of the educator and the family?

- Report the infection to the staff member designated by the early childhood education program or school for decision-making and action related to care of ill children. That person, in turn, alerts possibly exposed family and staff members to watch for symptoms.



Adult pinworm in the area around the anus. Inspection 2 to 3 hours after the child goes to sleep may reveal pinworms that have migrated outside of the intestinal tract to lay their eggs on the skin around the anus.

- Suspect pinworms if a child has intense itching around the anal or vaginal area.
- Refer the person with the infection to a health professional for treatment recommendations.
- Bathe the child in the morning to remove a large proportion of eggs that are laid at night.
- Avoid shaking bedding or underwear to prevent spreading ova through the air.
- Wash children's hands directly after using the toilet and before hands are involved with putting something into their mouths.
- Wash toys frequently.
- Clean and sanitize surfaces used for eating, toileting, hand hygiene, food preparation, and diapering.

Exclude from educational setting?

No.

Comments

- Pinworms are not dangerous.
- Pinworms are relatively common among preschool and school-aged children and easily shared within these groups.
- In the past, pinworms were found in 5% to 15% of the US population, but prevalence has since decreased.

