

PINWORM FACT SHEET

What are pinworms?

Pinworms are small, thin, white parasitic roundworms that can live in the colon and rectum of humans. They cause an infection called Enterobiasis which causes uncomfortable itching around the anus. This condition is uncomfortable but normally not life threatening.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may include:

- Itching around the anus which can lead to difficulty sleeping.
- Often symptoms are mild and some infected people have no symptoms.

How is it treated?

- Prescription or over-the-counter medications are available. See a health care provider for treatment recommendations.
- Good hand hygiene, showering, and daily changing of underwear are best for removal and avoiding reinfection.

How can it be prevented?

- Good hand hygiene is the most effective way to prevent pinworms. This includes washing with soap and warm water often, keeping fingernails clean and short and avoiding scratching the anal area.
- Daily bathing and changing of underwear helps remove a large portion of eggs and can prevent reinfection.

How is it spread?

- While sleeping, a female pinworm will exit the anus, lay eggs on the surrounding skin causing itching. When scratched, the eggs get on the fingers and enter the mouth when the face is touched. Then the cycle begins again.
- Pinworm eggs become infective a few hours after being laid. They can survive on bedding, clothes or other surfaces for 2-3 weeks.
- Because they are so small, the eggs can sometimes become airborne and inhaled while breathing.
- Infections are rare from swimming pools.
- They cannot be transferred from people to pets or pets to people.

More Information: <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/pinworm>

This FACT SHEET is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a healthcare provider. For more information call your healthcare provider.

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