

**You are being provided with this fact sheet:**

- because you or your child may have been exposed to pinworms.** If you believe your child has contracted pinworms, contact your health care provider. Notify your child care provider or preschool if a diagnosis of pinworms is made.
  - for informational purposes only.**
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**What are pinworms?**

Pinworms are very small, white roundworms. They are less than 1/2 inch long. They live in the rectum and large intestine of people and lay their eggs just outside the anus. The female lays eggs at night, which can cause itching at night around the anus and vaginal area. Pinworms are most common in preschool and school-aged children and their caregivers. Dogs and cats do not carry pinworms.

**What are the symptoms of pinworms?**

Pinworms cause intense rectal itching (especially at night), disturbed sleep, and irritability. Sometimes the worms may be seen around the anus or in the stool. Pinworms might also be associated with loss of appetite and restlessness. Some people do not have any symptoms.

**How are pinworms spread?**

Pinworms can be spread when infected individuals touch or scratch their rectal area and get the tiny eggs on their fingers and then touch other surfaces. If other people touch the same contaminated surface and then put their hands into their mouth, the eggs can be ingested and migrate down through the intestine. People are infectious as long as the female is laying eggs around the anus. Eggs can live up to 2-3 weeks outside of a human on clothes, bedding, or other objects. The first symptoms are typically seen 1 to 2 months after ingesting the worm eggs.

**Who is at risk for pinworms?**

Anyone who comes in contact with the eggs is at risk for getting pinworms.

**How are pinworms diagnosed?**

Pinworms can be diagnosed by directly observing the worms near the anus after the person is asleep for several hours. Sometimes an adhesive tape is placed near the rectum and viewed under the microscope to look for eggs. Eggs can sometimes be detected under fingernails after scratching.

**How are pinworms treated?**

Pinworms are treated with prescription medication. Consult your health care provider for more information. Treatment typically involves a two-dose course of medication.

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**How is the spread of pinworms reduced?**

- Hand washing is one of the primary ways to stop the spread of disease. Wash hands thoroughly after toileting or diapering and before handling food or eating.
- During infection, bathe first thing in the morning to reduce the number of eggs on the skin.
- Changing of undergarments, nightclothes, bath towels, and bed linens daily can decrease the number of eggs present. Remove sheets gently and avoid shaking them out – pinworm eggs are light and can float in air.
- Clean and vacuum indoor areas daily for several days after treatment.
- Keep fingernails cut short and discourage nail biting.

**Exclude from group setting?**

No, exclusion is not necessary.

**References:**

*American Academy of Pediatrics*

- Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools, 4<sup>th</sup> ed.

*Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (website)*

- Parasites – Enterobiasis (also known as Pinworm Infection), accessed December 2020.

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**Child Care Health Outreach Program**

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