

IDRS Infectious Disease Reporting System

Disease Reporting 24 Hours a Day

Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health

PINWORMS

Pinworms, or *Enterobius vermicularis*, are small, thin, white roundworms (about the length of a staple) that can live in the intestines of humans.

Symptoms

- Itching around the anus, especially at night
- Symptoms of pinworm infection usually are mild and some people have no symptoms.

Transmission

- Pinworms are the most common worm infection in the U.S. and affect all ages and groups.
- While an infected person sleeps, female pinworms leave the intestine through the anus and deposit their eggs on the surrounding skin. The eggs can survive for 2 to 3 weeks on clothing, bedding, or other objects. People become infected by accidentally swallowing pinworm eggs that are on fingers, under fingernails, or on contaminated clothes, objects and surfaces.
- Pinworm infection often occurs in more than one person in household and institutional settings. Child care centers often are the site of cases of pinworm infection.

Treatment

- Diagnosis is made by identifying the worm or its eggs. Worms can sometimes be seen on the skin near the anus or on clothing or sheets about 2 to 3 hours after falling asleep. Pinworm eggs can be collected and examined using the "tape test" as soon as the person wakes up. This "test" is done by firmly pressing the adhesive side of clear, transparent cellophane tape to the skin around the anus. The eggs stick to the tape and can be looked at under a microscope.
- Pinworms can be treated with medications. Consult a health care provider for guidance. Treatment involves two doses of medication 2 weeks apart. All household contacts and caretakers of the infected person should be treated at the same time.

Prevention

- Strict observance of good hand hygiene is the best way to prevent pinworm infection. This includes washing hands with soap and warm water after using the toilet, changing diapers, and before handling food. Keep fingernails clean and short, avoid fingernail-biting, and avoid scratching the skin in the perianal area. Teach children the importance of washing hands.
- Daily morning showering and daily changing of underwear helps removes a large proportion of eggs. Change and wash night clothes, towels, and bedding regularly in hot water.
- While young children are being treated, avoid bathing them together during the entire 2 week treatment period.

All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.



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