

# Pinworms

Dear Parent or Guardian,

You are being provided with this fact sheet:

- Because you or your child may have been exposed to pinworms.
  - For informational purposes only.
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## General Information About Pinworms

### What are pinworms?

- Pinworms are small, round, thin, white worms called *Enterobius vermicularis*.
- They live in the rectum and large intestine of people and lay their eggs just outside the anus.
- It takes 1-2 months from the time a person swallows (ingests) a pinworm egg until an adult pinworm moves to the anal area.
- The adult pinworms will continue to live in the large intestine. Female pinworms crawl out of the anus, usually at night, to lay their eggs on the surrounding skin.
- Dogs and cats do not carry pinworms.

### Who can get them?

- Anyone can get pinworms.
- Pinworms are most commonly found in preschool and school-aged children and their caregivers.

### What are the symptoms?

- Intense itching around the anus (especially at night) that can lead to difficulty sleeping and feeling restless. The itching happens when the female pinworm lays eggs at night.
- Pinworms may be seen around the anus or in the stool (poop). The worms are less than ½ inch long.
- People with pinworms can also have a poor appetite.
- Some people do not have any symptoms.

### How are they spread?

- People can get pinworms by swallowing (ingesting) pinworm eggs that are on their fingers or under their fingernails. This can happen if they scratch the area around their anus or touch clothing, underwear, bedding, towels, and other surfaces that have pinworm eggs on them.
  - Since the eggs are small, they can sometimes float in the air and can be breathed in. For example, shaking sheets when making the bed can release the eggs into the air.
  - Pinworms will continue to spread as long as there is a female pinworm in the person's intestine laying eggs.
  - The eggs can live up to 2 weeks outside of a human on clothes, bedding, or other surfaces.
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## How Do I Know If My Child Has Pinworms?

A healthcare provider can diagnose pinworms. Sometimes an adhesive tape is placed near the anus and viewed under the microscope to look for eggs.

**If you have additional questions or are concerned your child might have pinworms, contact your healthcare provider. This fact sheet provides general information only.**

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## What If My Child Has Pinworms?

**Notify your child care provider or preschool immediately if your child has pinworms.**

### How are pinworms treated?

- Pinworms are treated with medication. Talk with your healthcare provider for more information.
- The medication does not always kill all pinworm eggs. Treatment needs to be repeated 2 weeks after the first treatment to kill new pinworms that have hatched since the first treatment.
- If more than one person in a household has pinworms, everyone in the household may need to be treated at the same time to prevent further spread.

### How can I help prevent pinworms from spreading?

- Wash hands often, especially after using the toilet, after changing diapers, before handling food, and before eating.
  - People who have pinworms should consider showering every morning. This helps to remove many of eggs on the skin. Showering, in this situation, is better than taking a bath.
  - Change underwear, pajamas, towels, and sheets every day. Wash these items using a hot (130°F [54.4°C]) water cycle and dry on the hottest setting.
  - Since pinworms can spread after a person scratches the area with pinworms, keep fingernails cut short and discourage nail biting.
  - Clean and sanitize household surfaces.
  - Avoid sharing personal items, such as towels, clothes, and sheets.
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## Does My Child Need to Stay Home from Child Care?

**No.** Children who have been exposed to, or have been diagnosed with, pinworm can continue to attend child care **unless**:

- They have a fever (temperature of 100.4°F [38°C] or higher) along with other symptoms.
- They do not feel well enough to participate in classroom activities (for example: unusually tired; cranky or fussy; or crying more than normal).

**Please follow your child care program's sickness policy.**

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### References

American Academy of Pediatrics

- Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition. Page 155-156

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

- Parasites – Enterobiasis (also known as Pinworm Infection).  
<https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/pinworm/>