

# Pinworm

## What is Pinworm?

Pinworm is an intestinal infection caused by a roundworm called *Enterobius vermicularis*. It is a common human intestinal parasite, especially in children. Pinworms are common among people living in close contact. It tends to occur in all people within a household.

## Symptoms of Pinworm

Individuals with pinworm usually have no symptoms. However, there may be itching around the anus, disturbed sleep and irritability. Occasionally, a secondary infection may develop if the skin is scratched.

## How Pinworm spreads

Pinworms spread by the ingestion of pinworm eggs. The eggs can spread from person to person by direct hand contact (e.g., from anus to mouth of the same or another person). When an infected person scratches the itchy area (in the anus), the eggs may stick on the fingers and under the fingernails and may then be passed to others. The infection can also be spread between sexual partners. Pinworm eggs may also be spread through bed sheets, clothing, food, toys, toilet seats, baths or other contaminated items. Household pets often carry the eggs in their fur even though they may not be infected.

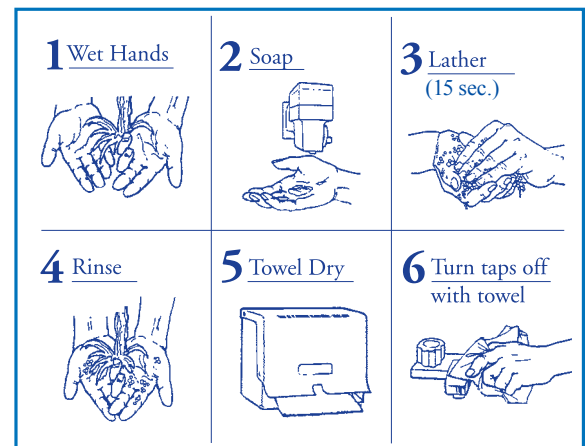
Dust containing eggs can become airborne when shaken from bed clothes and linens. As long as the female worm is discharging the eggs, the person may infect others. The eggs are hardy and can remain infectious in moist surroundings for up to three weeks. They do not tolerate heat well, but can survive in low temperatures: two-thirds of the eggs are still alive after 18 hours at minus eight degrees Celsius. An infection from pinworms can last up to one month. Long standing infections are most likely due to continuous re-infection.

## Preventing Pinworm

There is no vaccine to prevent pinworms. The most effective method of preventing pinworms is frequent hand washing.

To prevent the spread of Pinworm, infected individuals should:

- Obtain medical treatment
- Wash hands before eating or preparing food
- Keep nails short



For further information, please call:  
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- Avoid scratching bare anal area
- Avoid biting fingernails
- Take showers instead of baths
- Change clothing, pyjamas and bed sheets frequently, preferably after showering
- Clean and vacuum house frequently for several days after treatment
- Reduce overcrowding in one's living space

## Treating Pinworm

Pinworm can be treated with medication prescribed by a doctor. The medication kills the adult pinworms but not the eggs. Therefore re-treatment is recommended in two weeks. The entire family should be treated regardless of whether or not symptoms are present. Re-infections are common and repeated treatment courses may be needed.

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