

Fact Sheet: Pinworms

What is Pinworm Disease?

Pinworm disease is a common intestinal infection caused by tiny parasitic organisms. It most frequently affects school age and preschool children as well as parents of infected children. However, the disease can affect anyone.

What are the symptoms?

- Severe anal itch
- Nervousness and irritability during the day
- Difficulty sleeping at night
- If you suspect pinworm disease, you can check the anal area and may see small white threadlike worms.

How is it spread?

The disease is spread directly by hands from the anus to the mouth or indirectly through clothing, bedding, food or other items from the infected person. Dust borne infection is also possible in heavily contaminated households. **Pinworms can survive up to 2 weeks on clothing, bedding, or other objects.**

How is it treated?

When your doctor verifies pinworm disease, a medication will be prescribed for the patient and perhaps for the whole family. Take all medication as directed, even if you start to feel better.

Do the following until treatment is completed:

- Keep nails short.
- Wash hands and nails often, especially before eating and after going to the toilet.
- Avoid scratching the anal area.
- Take a shower or stand-up bath every morning.
- Wear snug fitting underwear at all times; change underwear every morning after bathing.
- Each morning, wash pajamas and bed linens in **hot water!** Do not shake out bed linen; this will only spread the pinworm eggs!
- Scrub bathroom floors and toilet seats with a solution made fresh daily with 1 part bleach and 10 parts water.
- Floors, rugs and upholstered furniture should be vacuumed daily for several days after starting the medication.

How is it prevented?

Good hygiene is the best prevention. Wash your hands and your children's hands after using the bathroom, changing diapers, before eating, and before and after preparing food.

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 health care provider. For more information call your health care provider or call Washtenaw County Public Health at 734-544-6700.

