

PINWORMS - Intestinal Parasitic Disorder - Enterobiasis

SYMPTOMS: The infected person may be asymptomatic. There may be perianal itching and a secondary infection of the skin due to scratching. Because it is at night when the worms travel to the anus to lay the eggs, the itching at night may be intense, making the person irritable and restless due to lack of sleep. A symptomatic disease with many worms may result from successive reinfestations occurring within months after the initial exposure.

DIAGNOSIS: The physician uses a piece of transparent tape and attempts to pick up eggs that have been deposited around the anus. This is then examined under a microscope for eggs. Eggs and female worms can be seen in a microscopic exam of the urine or stool.

TRANSMISSION: Pinworms are transmitted by inhaling or ingesting the eggs. They can be carried from hand to mouth if the infected person does not use good hygiene. They can also be spread indirectly by clothing, bedding or any contaminated article. If bedding is shaken, the eggs may be dropped and spread around in the dust to be inhaled.

The eggs that have been ingested or inhaled migrate to the upper intestine where they mature in 2-4 weeks. The larvae then migrate lower in the intestine where they mate. The females then crawl down the intestine, exiting through the anus, and lay their eggs around the anus. The movement of the worms causes the itching. Scratching can deposit eggs on hands and under fingernails which can then reinfect the person or be transferred to another person, food, or object. The egg has a life span of about 2 weeks. Pinworms of animals cannot be transmitted to man.

TREATMENT:

- The entire family should be treated with a systemic drug and this drug treatment should be repeated again in 2-3 weeks.
- Wash all bedding and clothes (including underwear, pajamas) in hot water and use as hot a dryer as possible **daily** for several days after the treatment is begun.
- Vacuum the mattress, rugs, and furniture thoroughly **daily** for several days after the treatment is begun.
- Shower or take a stand-up bath every morning to remove any eggs that may have been deposited during the night.
- Use good hygiene after using the toilet: Dispose of tissue in toilet and wash hands thoroughly with soap under running water for at least 15 seconds.

- Use thorough hand washing before eating.
- Keep fingernails short and discourage scratching bare anal area.
- Keep fingers out of the mouth and discourage nail-biting.

The infected person should not be considered to be free of the parasite until he has had 3 consecutive negative examinations.

SCHOOL IMPLICATIONS:

- Keep toilets clean.
- Thorough hand washing, especially before meals.