



Pinworms

Patient and Family Education

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Your child's doctor or a member of your child's health care team will talk with you about specific care for your child.

What are pinworms?

Pinworms are thin, white worms ($\frac{1}{4}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$ inch long) that infect the large intestine (colon). They do not cause a serious health problem.

- They are usually seen in the “bottom” area (buttock and anal area).
- Pinworm eggs are spread directly from person-to-person or by touching bedding, food and other items that contain the eggs.
- Swallowing pinworm eggs causes pinworm infections.
- Children can get pinworms no matter how clean you keep your home and your child.
- Your child can go to school with pinworms, but should be treated to help prevent spreading them.

What are the possible symptoms?

Your child may have one or more of these:

- Pain, itching and redness of the “bottom” area
- Seeing the pinworm in the stool
- Seeing the pinworm on the child's anal area
- For girls, redness and itching in the vaginal area

How can I check for pinworms?

- Look for a small, white, threadlike worm that moves around the “bottom” area.
- Check for worms two days in a row after your child has gone to bed and first thing in the morning. You may need to use a flashlight.

What is the treatment?

Some general guidelines to follow include:

- Give pinworm medicine as ordered by your child's doctor. Do not use an over-the-counter medicine for pinworms.
- Tell your child's doctor if any other family member sleeps in the same bed with your infected child.
- Treat the whole family for pinworms, if ordered by the doctor.
- Steroid creams for itching as directed by your child's doctor. Do not use the cream on large areas of the body.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Pinworms, continued

How can I prevent my child from getting pinworms again?

- Teach your child to wash hands and fingernails with soap and water before eating, after using the bathroom and after playing outside, especially in an outdoor sandbox.
- Keep fingernails short to help prevent scratching.
- Vacuum or mop your child's room once every week since pinworm eggs can live for one to two weeks
- Wash all clothing and linen (sheets and towels) in soapy hot water to kill any pinworm eggs that may be living on the clothing and linen
- Change underwear every day
- Clean toilet seats every day
- Change sand in the sandbox if you have one.

When should I call the doctor?

Call your child's doctor if:

- The skin around the anus becomes red or tender
- Anal itching does not stop within one week after treatment

Also call your child's doctor if you have questions or concerns about how your child looks or feels.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.