

# Pinworm Infection

Pinworms are tiny worms that can infect your child's intestinal tract. They may cause itching around the anus, especially at night. However, your child may have no symptoms at all.

## What is pinworm infection?

Pinworm infection is infection with tiny worms. Pinworm infection is very common and spreads easily, especially among young children. The infection is not serious, but it can be uncomfortable. Simple treatments can get rid of the worms.

## What does it look like?

- Pinworm infection may produce only mild symptoms or no symptoms at all.
- The main symptom is itching around the anus.
- Itching often occurs at night and may interfere with your child's sleep.
- In girls, itching may occur around the vagina.
- Your child may be irritable or restless.

## What causes pinworm infection?

- Pinworms are common parasites. Their scientific name is *Enterobius vermicularis*; pinworm infection is sometimes called enterobiasis.
- Infection occurs when your child gets pinworm eggs into his or her mouth (ingestion).
- Pinworm infection spreads easily.

## What are some possible complications of pinworm infection?

- Pinworm infection rarely causes any serious medical problems.
- Rarely, a small area of inflammation (granuloma) may occur around your child's anus.

## What puts your child at risk of pinworm infection?

- Contact with other children infected with pinworms. This commonly occurs at school or day care centers.

- If one child in your home is infected, your other children may become infected as well.
- Pinworms are most common in areas with warm climates.
- Infection is most likely to occur in places where children live, play, and sleep close together.

## Can pinworm infection be prevented?

- Because pinworm infection is so common, it is very difficult to prevent.
- Try to keep children from putting unwashed hands into their mouths. Keep their nails short, because pinworm eggs get underneath the nails.
- Your child's treatment will include recommendations to avoid spreading the infection to others and to prevent your child from becoming infected with pinworms again.

## How is pinworm infection diagnosed and treated?

Your doctor may have you do a "Scotch Tape test" at home. Early in the morning, before your child wakes up, press a piece of sticky tape on the area around your child's anus. The doctor will then look under the microscope to see if any eggs are stuck to the tape. He or she may provide you with a special paddle to use in performing this test.

- Your child will need treatment with worm-killing medications, which will be prescribed by the doctor.
- Your child should be given one dose of medication immediately. Depending on the medication, your child should take another dose in two weeks.
- While your child is being treated for pinworms, take steps to avoid spreading the infection or having your child's becoming infected again.
  - Have your child bathe each morning.
  - Wash underwear, pajamas, and sheets frequently.
  - Make sure your child washes his or her hands frequently. Keep fingernails short, and try to discourage your child from scratching around the anus.
  - Parents should also wash their hands frequently, especially after changing diapers.

## When should I call your office?

Call our office if:

- Your child's symptoms of anal itching don't go away or come back after treatment for pinworm infection.

