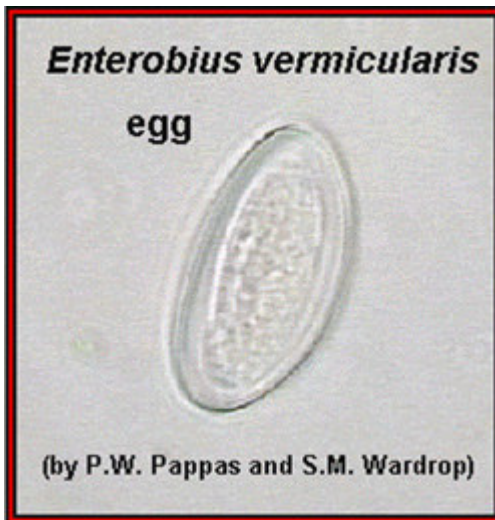


What are pinworms?

- Pinworms are small, white worms. They can live in a child's anus (rectum).
- They are about 1/2 inch long.
- Pinworms can sometimes be seen around a child's anus or in his stool.

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(Images from Ohio State University at <http://www.biosci.ohio-state.edu/~parasite/enterobius.html>)

What causes them?

- A worm called *Enterobius vermicularis* causes pinworm infections.
- Other common names are threadworms or seatworms.

Who can get them?

- School-aged children and preschoolers are most at risk.
- But, anyone can be infected.
- Pinworms infect about 200 million people worldwide. About 40 million people in the United States and Canada are infected.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Itching around the anus
- Problems sleeping
- Loss of appetite
- Weight loss
- Being nervous
- Being irritated

- Girls can have itching in the vagina

Are pinworms contagious?

- Yes, pinworms are very contagious.
- At night, the female pinworm leaves the rectum. She lays eggs on the skin around the anus.
- The child scratches his anus and the eggs get under his fingernails.
- The eggs are passed to places he touches.
- The eggs are able to live on many objects. They can live for 2 to 3 weeks.
 - Unwashed hands
 - Bedding
 - Clothes (especially underwear and pajamas)
 - Toilets/bathrooms
 - Toys
 - Food
 - Dust particles in the air, etc.
- Another person touches that place and gets the eggs on his hands.
- He touches his mouth and the eggs get inside his body.
- A new infection starts.

How are they diagnosed?

- You can stick a piece of clear tape over his anus. Do this first thing in the morning.
- The eggs and worms will stick to the tape.
- Put the tape in a plastic bag. Take the bag to your child's doctor.
- Eggs and worms on the tape can be seen with a microscope.

How are they treated?

- Pinworms are treated with drugs.
- Everyone in your house should take the drugs even if they do not have pinworms.

How long do they last?

- If treated, pinworm infections are gone in 2 weeks.

Can they be prevented from spreading?

- Yes, the spread of pinworms can be prevented.
 - Wash hands and under fingernails a lot. Be sure to wash after going to the bathroom, or after changing diapers. Also wash hands before and after eating.
 - Take a bath first thing in the morning.
 - Change and wash your underwear and pajamas every day.
 - Change and wash bedding every day.
 - Clip fingernails short.
 - Do not bite fingernails.
 - Do not scratch around the anus.
 - Clean the bathrooms and bedrooms.

When should I call the doctor?

- Call your doctor if your child has an itchy anus or genital area.
- Call your doctor if your child has problems sleeping at night.
- Call your doctor if you have any questions about your child's condition.

Quick Answers

- Pinworms are small, white worms. They can live in a child's anus (rectum).
- School-aged children and preschoolers are most at risk. But anyone can be infected.
- The most common problems are itching around the anus and problems sleeping.
- Pinworms are contagious. To help prevent spreading, wash hands and under fingernails frequently. Also change and wash underwear every day.
- Pinworms are treated with drugs.
- If treated, pinworm infections are gone in 2 weeks.
- Call your doctor if your child has an itchy anus or has problems sleeping at night.

References

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