



Pinworms

Patient and Family Education

What are pinworms?

Pinworms are thin, white worms ($\frac{1}{4}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$ inch long) that infect the large intestine (colon).

- They are usually seen in the “bottom” area (buttock and anal area). Swallowing pinworm eggs causes pinworm infections.
- Children can get pinworms regardless of how clean you keep your home and your child.
- Though uncomfortable, pinworms cause no serious health problems.
- Pinworm eggs are spread directly from person to person or by touching bedding, food and other items that contain the eggs.

What are the possible symptoms?

Your child may have one or more of the following symptoms:

- 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?

Your child’s doctor will talk with you about specific care for your child. Some general guidelines to follow include:

- Give pinworm medicine as ordered by your child’s doctor.
- 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 such as 1% hydrocortisone cream. Do not use the cream on large areas of the body.

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.
- 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
- Keep fingernails short

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

This is general information and is not specific medical advice for your child. Always consult your child’s doctor or other healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns about the care or health of your child. A Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta pediatric advice nurse is available 24 hours a day at 404-250-KIDS.

Pinworms, continued

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

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