



## INFORMATION SHEET: THREADWORMS

Threadworms, sometimes known as pinworms, are small, white, thread-like worms a few millimetres long, which live in the human gut.

### SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS:

Many children do not show any symptoms. But symptoms can include:

- Itching around the anus (and in girls the vagina too), which becomes much worse at night.
- Disturbed sleep and irritability.
- Skin infection due to bacteria entering scratches.
- Loss of appetite.
- Weight loss.

When going to the toilet it looks as if the child is passing strings of white cotton thread. Threadworms can grow to become 2-13 millimetres long, living for up to six weeks in the gut.

### TREATMENT:

- Treatment can be obtained from a pharmacist or Doctor. You should get advice from a Doctor if you are pregnant, breastfeeding or for infants under three months.
- Strict personal hygiene is essential to prevent re-infection. Drugs will kill the worms in the intestines but not the eggs laid outside the anus. Eggs can survive for up to three weeks outside the body, on underwear, bedding, in the dust, etc. They can re-enter the gut and re-infect someone that has been treated.
- All family members should be treated simultaneously, even if they do not show any symptoms.
- No swimming for one week once the treatment is started.

### PREVENTION OF SPREAD AND RE-INFECTION:

- Wear close-fitting underwear at night.
- Upon waking each morning, have a bath or shower, washing especially around the anal region.
- Change and wash underwear, nightwear, bed linen and towels each day. Do not share towels or face flannels.
- Put toothbrushes in a closed cupboard, and rinse them well before use.
- Disinfect bathroom surfaces daily.
- Vacuum carpets and damp dust surfaces daily, washing the cloth frequently in hot water.
- Wash hands and scrub under the nails first thing in the morning, after using the toilet or changing nappies, and before eating or preparing food.



GENERAL PREVENTIVE MEASURES:

- Keep fingernails short.
- Avoid eating food in the bedroom.
- Discourage children from putting their hands in their mouths.
- Wash hands before eating and after visiting the toilet.
- Make sure there is good ventilation and reduce humidity in the house.

EXCLUSION FROM SCHOOL:

It is not necessary to stay away from school, but treatment must be started for the whole family without delay. It is important to inform your child's class teacher about the illness, so that all preventive measures can be put in place and reinforced if needed.

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