



Pinworms

What are pinworms?

Pinworms are small roundworms that live in the large intestine in humans, mostly children. During sleep, the pinworms leave the intestine through the anus and lay eggs on the surrounding skin.

How do you get pinworms?

Pinworms get into the body when pinworm eggs are swallowed. Pinworms and their eggs can be spread from an infected person to others through bed linens and towels, clothing, faucet handles, bath tubs, showers and sinks, door knobs, furniture or food. Persons can reinfect themselves as well as others by not washing their hands.

How do you know if you have pinworms?

When a person has pinworms, a sensation, which varies from a very mild tickling to severe itching or pain, occurs around the anus and surrounding skin. Other symptoms include: disturbed sleep, loss of appetite, weight loss, nausea and vomiting, and infections of the skin around the anus from scratching. An actual diagnosis of pinworms comes from finding worms or eggs during an exam by your health care provider.

How do you get rid of pinworms?

A specific treatment will be prescribed by your health care provider. The whole family may need to be treated.

You will also need to do these things:

- Take daily morning showers rather than tub baths. Morning showers help wash away eggs laid on your skin during the night.
- Put on clean underclothes and night clothes.
- Change bed sheets as directed by your health care provider; wash bed linens and towels using hot water.
- Clean and vacuum the house daily for a few days after treatment.
- Wash hands often, after using the restroom, after changing diapers and especially before eating and preparing food.
- Keep fingernails short and don't bite them.
- Don't scratch bare anal area.
- Reduce overcrowding in living quarters.
- Keep restrooms clean and working properly.

School/Child Care Precautions:

If your child is infected, he should remain at home until 24 hours after he has been seen by a physician and received the first treatment.

Remember:

- See your health care provider if you have any of these symptoms.
- Take your medicine as directed.
- Practice good hygiene to prevent future infections.

For more information contact Guilford County Department of Public Health at 641-7777 or www.guilfordhealth.org