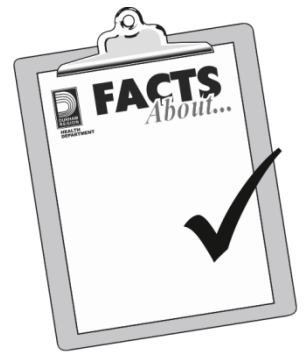




FACTS

About...



HEALTH DEPARTMENT



Pinworms

What is it?

Pinworms are microscopic (very small), white, thread-like worms (*Enterobius vermicularis*) that live in the intestine. Pinworm infection is a common, mild infection that often affects school children and preschoolers however all ages and classes of people can be affected. It spreads easily among children and staff in child care settings. It can often infect more than one person in the family and reinfection is common.

How is it spread?

- Pinworm infection can be spread directly when an infected person scratches the itchy area around their anal region (bum) and transfers the parasite's eggs to their mouth or another person's mouth.
- It can also be spread indirectly when people touch their mouth after they handle clothing, bedding, food, toys or other articles that have eggs on them, as eggs can live for up to 3 weeks outside the body.
- When pinworm eggs are picked up on the hands and ingested, the eggs travel to the intestines (gut) where they hatch and mature. The mature worms travel to the anus where they lay a new batch of eggs (usually at night) in the surrounding skin, which can cause itchiness.

What do I look for?

Itching around the anus, disturbed sleep, and irritability are the most common symptoms. Sometimes the scratched skin may become infected by other germs. Sometimes there are no symptoms at all.

Diagnosis is made by either seeing adult worms in the anal region (best examined 2-3 hours after person is asleep). Diagnosis can also be made by patting tape around the anus and having the tape studied under a microscope for eggs.

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For more information

Durham Region Health Department

905-666-6241 1-800-841-2729 durham.ca

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



How is it treated?

Treatment is available from your health care provider or over the counter and may have to be repeated after two weeks. Entire families may need to be treated if several members are infected.

How can I protect myself?

- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water, especially after using the toilet and before eating or preparing food. Use hand sanitizer when hands are not visibly dirty.
- Keep nails short and prevent children from scratching the anal area and putting fingers in mouth.
- Identify and treat cases to remove sources of infection.
- Infected people should bathe in the morning. Showers are better as they prevent eggs being spread in the bath water.
- Change bed linens, underclothing after bathing and change night clothes and bed sheets often. Handle them without shaking (which can scatter the eggs). Wash clothing and linens in hot water.
- Eggs are sensitive to sunlight, open blinds or curtain in bedrooms/sleeping areas during the day.
- Clean/vacuum the house daily for several days after treatment of cases.
- Clean toilet areas thoroughly and often.
- Toys, equipment and commonly touched surfaces should be cleaned often.
- If you are ill, stay at home and isolate yourself from others.

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