

ALLEGAN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Office Administration

(269) 673-5411

Bioterrorism Preparedness

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Personal Health

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Communicable Disease

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PINWORMS

What is pinworm infection?

Pinworms are small, white worms about the length of a staple. They live in the rectum of humans. Pinworms are the most common worm infection in the United States.

Who gets pinworms?

Anyone can get pinworms. It is more common in school-age children than preschoolers. Adults are rarely affected except for parents of infected children. Infection often occurs in more than one family member.

How are pinworms spread?

People get pinworm infections from touching contaminated objects such as clothing, bedding and toys, or breathing airborne eggs. Pinworms can spread as long as the worm stays alive in the infected person. The eggs can survive up to three weeks on clothing and other objects. Animals cannot spread pinworms to people.

What are the symptoms of pinworm?

Symptoms include:

- Itching around the anus
- Irritability and restlessness
- Trouble sleeping
- Loss of appetite
- Rectal or genital pain

Many people have no symptoms at all.

How are pinworms treated?

Treatment is given in two doses. The second dose is given two weeks after the first. Underwear, pajamas and sheets should be changed after each treatment. Sheets and towels should be washed in hot water and dried in a dryer on the hot setting. The eggs are sensitive to light so curtains should be opened in bedrooms during the day. If the infection comes back after treatment, the infected person and all close family members should get the same two dose treatment again.

Do I need to keep my child home from school?

Yes. Children with pinworms should be kept home from school or daycare until effective treatment is started.

How can pinworms be prevented?

- Wash your hands before and after going to the bathroom.
- Wash your hands before eating.
- Keep fingernails short.
- Keep fingers out of your mouth.
- Avoid scratching the anal area.

This fact sheet is not intended to replace the advice of your physician. Parents should contact their healthcare provider if they have concerns regarding their child's health. If you have general questions, you may contact an Allegan County Public Health Nurse at 269-673-5411.