

THREADWORMS

(also known as PINWORMS)

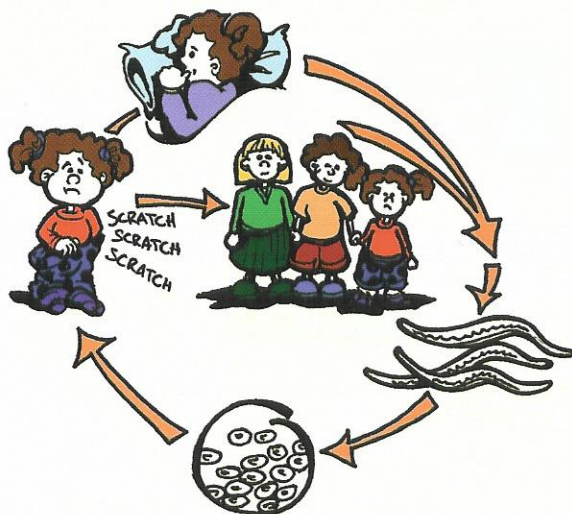
Threadworms are the most common worms affecting humans. They look like short pieces of white cotton (about 5-10mm long). Anyone can become infected with threadworms. However, because of the way they are spread, threadworms are more often found in children than in adults.

Threadworms are only transferred by people – worms infecting dogs and cats are not threadworms.

When threadworm eggs are swallowed, they hatch in the gut. Within 2-4 weeks the adult female worm moves down the gut to the anus where she lays thousands of tiny eggs. This usually happens at night when you are asleep or relaxed.

The threadworm cycle

The 'glue' used to stick the eggs to the anus is irritating and causes the infected person to scratch there. The eggs stick to the fingers and are easily transferred to the mouth, to food, or to other people. Bedclothes, furniture, floors (especially around toilets), and other places in the home can have threadworm eggs on them. The eggs can survive for about a day or so.



Signs and symptoms

- Sometimes none
- Itching around the anus or vagina, especially at night
- Threadworms on the outside of a bowel motion or around the anus (like short pieces of white cotton, about 5-10mm long, which move)
- Restless sleep – sometimes resulting in bedwetting and being cranky.

Teeth grinding, nose picking, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea and loss of appetite are often said to be symptoms of threadworms. However, unless the threadworm is seen, you can not be sure that someone has threadworms.

Finding threadworms

- Look for worms on the outside surface of bowel motions. Do not mistake fluff or thread for threadworms – look for movement.
- In the morning before bathing, press a piece of sticky tape over the anus. Any eggs will stick to the tape. Have your doctor examine the tape under a microscope.
- Worms may be seen moving around the anus at night, often about an hour after going to sleep.

It is not necessary to 'worm' the family when you worm the family pets – dogs and cats do not get threadworms or pass them on to people.

Important

There are many other causes of anal itching, including eczema, fungal infections and haemorrhoids (piles). An allergic reaction to soap, perfumes or creams used around the anus can also cause itching. If you are unsure if threadworms are present, or if scratching has damaged the skin, see a doctor.

Medicine

Do not give worm medicine without first checking to make sure worms are present. When you are sure, do the following:

- Treat the whole family with a worm medicine. Follow the instructions on the pack. Women who are pregnant, children under six months, and people with kidney, liver or heart disease should talk to their doctor about treatment.
- Ask a pharmacist about treating children between six months and two years of age.
- Shower on the night the medicine is given, and again the next morning to remove eggs laid during the night.
- Apply anti-itch ointment (ask a pharmacist) to the anal area at bedtime to help stop scratching. Take care not to infect the ointment left in the tube.

Self Care

- Wash and iron bedlinen, sleepwear, underwear and towels. The heat of the iron will kill the eggs. Do not shake bed linen indoors as this can spread eggs around.
- Scrub fingernails to remove eggs. Stop children from nail biting or thumbsucking.
- Keep fingernails short and clean.
- Dress children in sleeping suits, mittens or snug underpants to prevent eggs being picked up on fingers or under fingernails when scratching.
- Vacuum furniture, bedrooms and all around the toilet to remove any eggs.
- Encourage everyone to wash their hands when looking after infected children, after using the toilet and before handling food.

Other fact cards of interest:

- *Skin Rash*
- *Haemorrhoids*

Contact:

A doctor — listed under 'medical practitioners' in the yellow pages.

A Self Care pharmacy – to locate telephone 1300 369 772 and ask for the Pharmacy Self Care Field Officer.

In case of poisoning, phone the **Poisons Information Centre** on 13 11 26 from anywhere in Australia.

Pharmacists are medicines experts. Ask a pharmacist for advice when choosing a medicine.

Your **Self Care** Pharmacist

DAVID S. NOLTE PHARMACY 21767P
701 RATHDOWNE ST., NTH CARLTON 9349 1522

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