

Matron's Medical Advice Sheet No. 5

Threadworms Advice for Parents

Threadworm (or pinworms) are tiny worms in your child's poo. They're common in children and spread easily. You can treat them at home without seeing your GP.

Symptoms

You can often spot worms in your child's poo. They look like pieces of white thread. You might also see them around your child's bottom. The worms usually come out at night while your child is sleeping causing:

- extreme itching around your child's bottom, particularly at night
- irritability and waking up during the night

Threadworms may also cause these less common symptoms:

- Weight loss
- Wetting the bed
- Irritated skin around the bottom (anus)

Treatment

To help your child get better more quickly:

- You can buy medicine for threadworms from pharmacies. This is usually a chewable tablet or liquid you swallow
- Treat everyone in your household, even if they don't have symptoms (including any cats or dogs in the household)

When to get help

Call NHS 111 or see your GP if:

- You can treat them without seeing your GP
- Your pharmacist will be able to advise medication for you to buy

When to return to school

There's no need to keep your child off school if they have threadworms. Please let Matron know if your child has threadworms as they are easily spread. We will need to let other parents in your child's/children's year group know (*we will of course keep your name anonymous*).

Prevention

Threadworms spread when their eggs are swallowed. They lay eggs around your child's bottom, which make it itchy. The eggs get stuck on their fingers when they scratch. They can then pass on to anything they touch, including:

- clothes
- toys
- toothbrushes
- kitchen or bathroom surfaces
- bedding
- food
- pets

Eggs can then pass to other people when they touch these surfaces and touch their mouth. They take around 2 weeks to hatch. Children can get worms again after they've been treated for them if they get the eggs in their mouth. This is why it's important to encourage children to wash their hands regularly, especially before eating.

Although medicine kills the threadworms, it doesn't kill the eggs which can live for up to 2 weeks outside the body.

There are things you can do to stop becoming infected again:

Do	Don't
wash hands and scrub under fingernails - particularly before eating, after using the toilet	shake clothing or bedding, to prevent eggs landing on other surfaces
encourage children to wash hands regularly	share towels or flannels
bathe or shower every morning	bite nails or suck thumbs and fingers
rinse toothbrushes before using them	
keep fingernails short	
wash sleepwear, sheets, towels and soft toys (at normal temperature)	
disinfect kitchen and bathroom surfaces. Vacuum and dust with a damp cloth	
make sure children wear underwear at night - change it in the morning	