



# Threadworms

## What are threadworms?

Threadworms, also known as pinworms, are tiny parasitic worms that can infect your large intestine. Threadworms are most commonly seen in children. Other worms that infect people's intestinal tract, such as roundworms, hookworms and tapeworms, are uncommon in Australia.

## How do you get threadworms?

You or your child can get threadworms by accidentally swallowing worm eggs found on contaminated surfaces.

This can happen by scratching the anal region and then touching your mouth or food.

The eggs hatch in the large intestine and when the worm is ready to lay more, it leaves the intestine and lays eggs on the skin around a person's anus (bottom), causing itchiness.

It may also happen by touching surfaces or objects that have threadworm eggs on them e.g. furniture, kitchen or bathroom surfaces, kitchen utensils or toothbrushes, and then touching your mouth or food.

Threadworms can survive for up to two weeks in the environment.

## Signs and symptoms

- Very itchy bottom (or vagina in girls).
- Disturbed sleep because of itchiness.
- Irritability due to disturbed sleep and discomfort of itchiness.
- Evidence of worms (white threadlike specks) in faeces (poo).

## How do I know if my child has threadworms?

- Look for small white pieces of thread in your child's poo.
- You can also check your child's bottom for small white pieces of thread. These are most likely seen two to three hours after the child is asleep. If you suspect your child is infected, you can also place transparent tape on the skin near the anus before your child goes to sleep, and check it for eggs first thing in the morning. If your child is infected, eggs should be visible, but may be better seen under a microscope.

## Treatment

- Threadworm treatments are available over the counter from your local pharmacy. Speak to your pharmacist about treatment options.
- Treatment usually involves a single dose of syrup/pill for the infected person and each family member.

## How can I stop the spread of threadworms?

- Wash your hands frequently and scrub under your fingernails after going to the toilet and before eating food. Make sure your child does this too.
- Keep your child's and your own fingernails short.
- Change bed linen, towels and underwear daily for several days after treatment.



- Bedlinen and clothing should be machine-washed in hot water to ensure that all the eggs are killed.
- Vacuum and dust the house, paying particular attention to the bedrooms on a regular basis.
- Clean the bathroom and kitchen surfaces regularly.

## **Exclusion from school or day care**

Exclusion is not necessary if your child has threadworms and is being treated. However, you are encouraged to let your child's teacher know so other children may be checked for infection and prevent threadworm being spread further.

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.

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