

WORMS (Threadworms/Pinworms)

We have been informed by a few parents that their children have contracted worms. Below is some information that we hope you will find helpful regarding symptoms and treatment.

We would however still like you to inform the school office if your child has worms.

To treat threadworms successfully, all household members must be treated, even if they don't have any symptoms. This is because the risk of the infection spreading is very high.

The aim of treatment is to get rid of the threadworms and prevent reinfection. This will usually involve a combination of medication to kill the worms and strict hygiene measures to stop the spread of the eggs.

The main medication used to treat threadworms is available from your local pharmacy without a prescription. However, it's important to follow the manufacturer's instructions as it isn't suitable for everyone.

You only need to see your GP if you think:

- you have threadworms and you're pregnant or breastfeeding
- your child has threadworms and they're under two years old

This is because the recommended treatment in these circumstances usually isn't the same as that recommended for most other people.

Threadworms, also known as pinworms, are fairly common. In fact, up to one in five children can have threadworms at any time. They are not a reflection of your hygiene standards!

Fortunately they don't cause any harm and they're easily treated.

Threadworms are small white worms that look like short pieces of white cotton, about 5-10mm long.

The female lays her eggs on the skin surrounding the anus at night. The glue used to stick these eggs to the skin is what causes your child to itch.

The tiny eggs can live for about two weeks outside the human body and they can seem to get everywhere – on underwear, pyjamas, bed clothes, furniture, soft toys, door handles, etc. They can even be breathed in from the air.

Infections tend to occur more commonly in young children because they play and come into contact with each other more often.

When your child touches an infected surface and then puts his fingers in his mouth, he swallows the eggs which then pass into his digestive tract and hatch into baby worms.

These grow into adult worms as they move down the intestines. This takes about two to four weeks before they eventually come out of your child's rectum.

Symptoms

Your child may not experience any symptoms.

However, worms usually cause an itchy bottom, which is often worst at night.

Your child may become irritable, tired and grumpy from restless sleep. Some children may wet the bed or even grind their teeth.

Scratching the itchy area may damage the skin and cause infection, so it's important to see a doctor for treatment.

Very rarely does threadworm cause severe problems.

Prevention of threadworms

Some children seem more susceptible to threadworm re-infections than others. Here are some ideas to help break the cycle:

Teach children to always wash hands after using the toilet and before eating.

Wash the whole family's towels, bed linen and nightwear after treatment.

Cut fingernails short and discourage nail biting and finger sucking.

Wash daily and thoroughly around your child's bottom.

Provide a different towel for each family member to use.

Clean the toilet seat, toilet handle and door handle to the toilet regularly.