



Threadworms (Worms or pinworms)

You have been given this leaflet because you have asked for threadworm treatment that you can get “over the counter” (OTC) from pharmacies. After a local and national public consultation on OTC medicines, we do not routinely prescribe threadworm treatment anymore. You can treat at home without a visit to your GP.

Threadworms are tiny worms in your poo. They're common in children and spread easily. You can spot worms in your poo, they look like pieces of white thread. You might also see them around your child's bottom (anus). The worms usually come out at night while your child is sleeping. Other symptoms can include: extreme itching around the anus or vagina, particularly at night plus irritability and waking up during the night. Less common signs include: weight loss, wetting the bed and irritated skin around the anus.

Managing your condition

Medicine kills the threadworms, but not the eggs. Eggs can live for up to 2 weeks outside the body.

Do

- Wash hands and scrub under fingernails – particularly before eating, after using the toilet or changing nappies
- Encourage children to wash hands regularly
- Bathe or shower every morning
- Rinse toothbrushes before using them
- Keep fingernails short
- Wash sleepwear, sheets, towels and soft toys
- Disinfect kitchen and bathroom surfaces
- Vacuum and dust with a damp cloth
- Make sure children wear underwear at night – change it in the morning

Don't

- shake clothing or bedding, to prevent eggs landing on other surfaces
- share towels or flannels
- bite nails or suck thumbs and fingers
- You don't need to stay off school, nursery or work with threadworms.

How can I avoid threadworms?

Threadworms spread when their eggs are swallowed. They lay eggs around your anus, which make it itchy. The eggs get stuck on your fingers when you scratch. They can then pass on to anything you touch, including: clothes, toys, toothbrushes, food, kitchen or bathroom surfaces and bedding.

Eggs can then pass to other people when they touch these surfaces and touch their mouth. They take around 2 weeks to hatch. This is why it's important to wash hands regularly.

How do I treat?

You can buy medicine for threadworms from pharmacies (some restrictions may apply);

- Chewable tablet or liquid containing mebendazole. Follow the instructions supplied with the medicine, a further dose may be needed after 2 weeks, if re-infection is suspected.
- Treat everyone in your household, even if they don't have symptoms.
- Tell the pharmacist if you need to treat a child under 2, or if you're pregnant or breastfeeding as treatment might not be suitable and you may need to speak to a GP.

When should I see a GP?

If you are pregnant, breast-feeding or if your child is under 2 you may need to visit the GP for treatment.

For more information

- Visit your local pharmacy for advice

Be self-care aware

Find out more about self-care at www.nhs.uk