

## HEALTH INFORMATION

### What are pinworms?

Pinworms are tiny, white, thread-like worms that live in the rectum. The worms crawl out of the anus (bum) at night and lay their eggs on nearby skin. Pinworms can be uncomfortable but they do not cause disease. People who have pinworms aren't dirty. Children can get pinworms no matter how often they take a bath.

### How common are pinworms?

They are very common in children and spread easily among children in child care.

### How do pinworms spread?

**Directly:** An infected person who scratches the itchy area can get pinworm eggs on the fingers or under the fingernails. If that person touches another person's mouth, they will spread pinworms.

**Indirectly:** Eggs can get from an infected person onto objects, such as toys, toilet seats or baths, clothes or bedding. By sharing these objects, other people can pick up the eggs on their hands and then put them into their mouth.

Eggs can live for up to 2 weeks outside the body, on clothing, bedding or other objects.

### What are the symptoms?

Usually children with pinworms have no symptoms. Some children get very itchy around the anus and vagina, especially at night. If the infection is bad, your child can lose sleep and become cranky.

### What can parents do?

If you think your child has pinworms, contact your doctor. A simple test will check for pinworms. They can be treated with an oral medication that can take up to 2 weeks to work. Itching can continue for at least a week after taking the medication. Your doctor may give your child a second dose after 2 weeks.

Try to keep your child from itching. Bathing your child in the morning will help get rid of many of the eggs.

### How can I prevent pinworms from spreading?

Pinworms can come back if your child comes into contact with pinworm eggs again. They can stay alive in your home for up to 2 to 3 weeks.

- Make sure everyone in your family washes their hands carefully after going to the toilet, changing diapers, and before preparing or eating food.
- Wash your bed linens and clothes. Don't shake them because this can scatter the eggs.
- Keep everyone's fingernails short and avoid nail-biting.

- The eggs are sensitive to sunlight. Open blinds or curtains in bedrooms during the day when your child isn't sleeping.
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[www.cps.ca](http://www.cps.ca) - [info@cps.ca](mailto:info@cps.ca)