



Hawaii State Department of Health

Disease Investigation Branch

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Pinworm Disease

(enterobiasis)

What is pinworm disease?

Pinworm disease is a relatively common infection of the intestines by a parasitic worm called *Enterobius vermicularis*. The disease occurs most frequently in preschool-age and school-age children, and in mothers of infected children.

How do you get pinworm disease?

You get the disease by ingesting (eating) pinworm eggs. The eggs travel to the intestines where they hatch and mature. The mature worms then travel to the anus, where they deposit a new batch of eggs, usually at night. Contamination of the hands, clothing, and bedding can take place at this time. Transmission occurs when the eggs are transferred to a person's mouth, by hand from anus-to-mouth, or indirectly, by putting pinworm-contaminated items into the mouth.

What are the symptoms of pinworm disease?

Infection with pinworms usually causes itching around the anus, and irritability, often because of disrupted sleep. Some individuals with pinworm infection may not have any symptoms.

When do symptoms start?

The symptoms may start 2 weeks after ingesting infective pinworm eggs.

What is the treatment for pinworm disease?

Antiparasitic medications prescribed by a doctor are effective in pinworm infections. Household

and intimate contacts may also require treatment. Reinfection is common and several treatments may be necessary if exposure to the parasite continues.

Do infected persons need to stay home from work or school?

Infected children may return to school after appropriate treatment. Pinworm eggs can remain alive in an indoor environment for up to 2 weeks. Thus, it may help to vacuum or clean the classroom or workplace daily for several days after starting treatment of cases.

How can you keep from getting it?

Eliminate the source of infection by treating cases.

Wash the hands thoroughly before handling food or before eating.

Keep the fingernails short, discourage nail-biting, and avoid scratching the anal area.

Take early morning showers to help wash away any eggs deposited overnight around the anal area.

Change to clean underclothing, night clothes, and bed sheets daily, preferably after bathing. Take special care to avoid spreading eggs when changing bed sheets.

Vacuum the house, classroom, or workplace daily for several days after starting treatment of cases.