

What can I do to prevent threadworms?

Here are some simple steps you can take to prevent threadworms:

- Keep fingernails short and clean.
- **Wash hands and fingernails thoroughly**
 - first thing each morning
 - before touching food
 - after each visit to the toilet
 - after changing nappies or helping a child in the toilet
 - and before each meal
- Clean the toilet regularly
- Avoid sharing towels or nail brushes
- In child care and residential care settings use paper towels for hand drying

*Department of Public Health
And
Infection Prevention and Control,
Community and Disability Services
HSE South (Cork and Kerry)*

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THREADWORMS INFORMATION LEAFLET



What are threadworms?

They are tiny white worms about 2-3mm long, which look like "threads" of white cotton—hence the name threadworms. Threadworms live in the bowel and lay their eggs on the skin around the perianal area (anus/back passage). They are also known as pinworms.

Who can they affect?

ANYONE can get threadworms - they most commonly affect young children.

How can I tell if someone has threadworms?

The most common sign is scratching of the anus/back passage area, particularly at night. This may cause disturbed sleep and irritability. Sometimes secondary infection of the scratched skin occurs. Some people show no signs of infection, in which case it is a question of spotting the tiny white "thread-like" worms in bowel motions.

How do threadworms spread?

- Threadworms are passed from person to person by the eggs that they lay.
- When mature, the female threadworm lays her eggs at night on the skin around the anus/back passage area, and itching may occur.
- Scratching allows transfer of eggs to the fingers and fingernails. The eggs are so small and so widespread it is very easy for them to be swallowed.
- The eggs can also be present in house dust; they stick to clothing, carpets, towels and bedlinen; they can also be picked up from contact with someone who already has worms.
- Eggs can then be easily transferred to the mouth by finger sucking or nail biting, causing reinfection, and spread to other members of the family by direct contact.
- If hand hygiene is poor, the eggs may be spread to other people's food when it is handled.

- Eggs can survive for up to 2 weeks on clothing, bedding and in dust.
- Threadworms only affect humans, they do not affect pets.

How do I treat threadworms?

Threadworms are very easy to treat. Your pharmacist can supply treatment. If pregnant, under 2yrs of age or reoccurrence of infection please consult your family doctor. Children do not need to be kept off school.

Since threadworms can spread so easily, it is strongly recommended that the entire household is treated at the same time. Treatment will kill the threadworms but not the eggs. So good personal hygiene is important to prevent the eggs spreading and causing another infection.

Can I help in the treatment?

Yes. There are several things you can do to help get rid of threadworms:

- Make sure everyone uses their own towel and facecloth.
- Wear pyjamas or pants in bed.
- Keep fingernails cut short and clean.
- When starting the treatment change the bedding and nightwear of the person infected.
- During the treatment, it helps to change nightwear and the sheets on the bed of the person who is infected as often as possible, taking care not to disperse eggs.
- During the treatment showering or bathing in the morning paying particular attention to cleaning around the anus/ back passage area.
- Clean toilet areas regularly, attention to the toilet seat, toilet flush handle and door handles.
- Good housekeeping by damp dusting and hoovering is important, paying particular attention to bedrooms.