

## Pinworms – Guide to Reducing the Spread and Stopping the Infection

Pinworms are small, thin, white roundworms (about the length of a staple) that like to live in the human intestines. (They do not spread to your pets, and they do not come from your pets). While an infected person sleeps, female pinworms leave the intestine through the anus and deposit their eggs on the surrounding skin. Good hygiene is important to prevent and control pinworms:

- Because itching and scratching of the anal area is common in pinworm infection:
  - Wash before eating or handling food, after using the toilet, and after changing a diaper
  - Keeping fingernails clean and short – so eggs cannot hang out under them
  - Avoiding fingernail-biting
  - Avoiding scratching the skin in the anal and genital area
- Daily morning bathing removes a large proportion of eggs *laid last night*, showering may be preferred to avoid possible contamination of bath water.
- Careful handling and frequent changing of underclothing, night clothes, towels, and bedding can help reduce infection, reinfection, and environmental contamination with pinworm eggs.

Effective prevention and control methods include:

- Mass and simultaneous treatment, repeated in 2 weeks (entire families) – 1<sup>st</sup> dose kills the worms, the 2<sup>nd</sup> dose kills the eggs
- If one person has pinworms in home, everyone should be treated, even without symptoms, as the pinworms incubate in the small intestine for 1-2 months without symptoms
- Personal underclothing, towels and bedding should be laundered in hot water, especially after each treatment.
- Trimming and scrubbing the fingernails and bathing after treatment to help prevent reinfection and spread of pinworms
- Cleaning house – carpets and surfaces (pinworm eggs can live for 2-3 weeks on indoor surfaces)
- Exposing your house to as much light as possible during the day as sunlight kills the eggs

Discuss Treatment:

Please visit your family physician; they can discuss with you the risks of pinworms and treatment options available. Pinworms can pose a risk of serious illness and infections, especially the longer they are left without treatment.