

# Pinworms

Date:

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Your child may have been exposed to **pinworms** while at child care.

## **What are pinworms?**

Pinworms are tiny worms that can infest people (but not animals) and live in the lower intestine. The female worms crawl out at night and lay their eggs around the anus. Pinworms are very common in children and can easily spread to other family members. They are the most common intestinal parasite in the United States.

## **What are the symptoms of pinworms?**

Some infected people have no symptoms, but others may experience intense itching and irritation around the anus or vaginal area.

## **How serious are pinworms?**

Pinworms are not dangerous, just irritating.

## **How does a person get pinworms?**

When people scratch their itchy bottoms, the tiny eggs can come off onto their fingers or under the fingernails. People may then put their fingers into someone's food or mouth and the eggs are swallowed. Once in the intestine, they will hatch into worms. Pinworms can also be spread through contact with clothing or bedding. People can re-infest themselves by swallowing eggs that are on their own hands.

## **How long does it take to come down with pinworms after a person is exposed?**

Symptoms can start 2 weeks to 2 months after a pinworm egg has been swallowed.

## **When is a person with pinworms contagious?**

A person is contagious as long as the female worms are laying eggs around the person's anus.

## **How can I help prevent the spread of pinworms?**

- Wash hands well and often with soap and water, especially after using the toilet or changing diapers and before eating.
- Clean, rinse, and sanitize toys regularly at child care.
- Clean, rinse, and sanitize food preparation, diaper changing, and toileting areas. (Vacuuming may also help.)
- Change clothing (especially underwear and pajamas) and bedding of child with pinworms often and wash in hot water.
- Bathe child with pinworms in the morning to remove many of the eggs laid at night.
- Administer medication for pinworms as recommended by your health care provider. (May be recommended for other family members.)

## **What is the treatment for pinworms?**

There are both over-the-counter and prescription medicines that are effective against pinworms. Talk to your health care provider to see which medicine would be best for your family. Sometimes a cream is recommended for the itching.

## **If my child develops pinworms, must s/he stay away from child care?**

No.

