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## Pinworm (Enterobiasis) Information Sheet

### What are pinworms?

- Pinworms are a type of parasite that can live in a person's intestines. They are tiny, white, threadlike worms.
- Pinworms are very common in school-age children. They cause itching, but aren't harmful.

### How do pinworms spread?

- Pinworms spread very easily. Without careful hand washing, a person with pinworms can leave pinworm eggs on the things they touch. Pinworm eggs are too small to see. When you touch things that have pinworm eggs on them, the eggs get on your hands. When you eat or touch your mouth, you swallow the eggs without knowing it.
- The pinworm eggs develop into adult worms in your intestines. When you sleep, female pinworms come out of your rectum. They lay eggs on the skin around your anus, and then go back inside your intestine. This makes your bum itchy, causing you to scratch.
- Scratching gets pinworm eggs under your nails. When you touch things like clothes, bedding, food or toys, you can spread pinworm eggs to others.

### How do I know if I have pinworms?

- A lab test will tell us if you have pinworms. To get a sample for testing, we will give you a "pinworm paddle". This is a container with a sticky piece of plastic. The sticky plastic should be touched to the skin of your anus first thing in the morning. The pinworm eggs will stick to the plastic. Place the lid back on the container to protect the sample. The paddle is sent to the lab, where pinworm eggs can be seen under a microscope.

### How are pinworms treated?

- Pinworms can be treated with **over-the-counter** or prescription medication such as Dr. Reiss's pinworm medication. **You do not need a prescription.** Taken as directed, the treatment will kill the worms and help prevent the pinworms from spreading.
- Take 2 doses of medication, 2 weeks apart. The first dose kills the existing worms. The second dose will kill any eggs that hatch after first dose.

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

- Wash your hands regularly before and after every meal
- Cut your nails and scrub them daily



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- Bathe and shower every day
- Change your underwear and bedding every day
- Wash clothes, bedding, and towels regularly
- **DON'T** scratch the area around your rectum
- **DON'T** share or reuse towels or washcloths
- **DON'T** bite your nails

### **When should I call the doctor?**

Call your doctor if:

- the medication does not stop the itching
- you have side effects from the medication
- you have new or worsening symptoms

### **Should you treat the entire family?**

If your family members tend to get prone to pinworms, yes. If not, no.

### **Where can I get more information?**

- <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/pinworm/>
- <http://kidshealth.org/parent/infections/parasitic/pinworm.html>