

Threadworm – Advice for Parents

What is it?

This is the most common worm infection in the United Kingdom. It is mainly an infection of children but can affect adults who usually catch it from young children.

What are the symptoms?

Threadworms live in the gut of those who are infected. The only symptom usually present is itching around the back passage. The skin around the back passage can become broken and infected as a result of repeated scratching. People can be infected with threadworms without having any symptoms.

How is it spread?

Threadworms are passed directly from those with the infection to others from hand to mouth. The worm lays its eggs on the skin around the back passage. When this bare skin is scratched the eggs end up on the hands and can be passed to other people who eventually pass the eggs to their mouths and catch the infection. Underwear, nightwear and other articles may become soiled with worm eggs and can infect those who come into contact with them.

How can it be prevented?

The best way to prevent infection with worms is to carry out good hygiene at all times. Hands should be washed before eating and preparing food and finger nails should be kept short and clean. Scratching of the bare skin around the back passage and the biting of nails should be discouraged. Underclothes, nightwear and bedding should be changed as regularly as possible.

All those with threadworms require treatment. If more than one member of the family is affected the whole family may require treatment. Should you think that any member of your household may have an infection with threadworms you should go and see your GP who will arrange the necessary treatment.

Exclusion

All children aged less than five years and older children who are unable to maintain a good standard of hygiene should be kept away from school until they are treated. Adults who are food handlers or health service or nursery school employees should also stay off work until they are treated. All others should carry on with life as normal.