

PINWORMS, ROUNDWORMS AND HOOKWORMS

Pinworms or *Enterobius vermicularis* (EN-ter-O-be-us ver-MIK-u-lar-is)

Common tiny, white thread-like worms that live in the intestines of people spread mainly by children and found most often in family groups, day-cares centres, schools, and camps. Symptoms include intense scratching in the anal area (especially at night), irritability and trouble sleeping. Severe scratching may also cause a skin infection. The female worms crawl out of the anus at night and lay their eggs on the nearby skin. When an infected person scratches the itchy area, the eggs get stuck on the fingers and under the fingernails. The eggs can then reinfect the infected person or be passed to other people by the hands or objects they touch. The eggs can survive up to 2 weeks on clothing, bedding or other objects.

How do you prevent Pinworm infections? Wash your hands frequently particularly after using the bathroom, changing diapers and eating. Wear clean underwear daily and change night clothes and bed sheets frequently and after each treatment. Bathe frequently, avoid scratching and trim fingernails short to reduce the risk of self reinfection. Children may return to child care after the first dose of treatment along with a bath and nail trim. It is easy to treat pinworms – talk to your doctor or pharmacist for advice.

Roundworms or *Toxocariasis* (TOX-o-kah-RYE-uh-sis)

Roundworm eggs that are passed from the feces of dogs (*Toxocara canis*) and sometimes cats (*Toxocara cati*) can cause serious illness in humans. The disease they cause is called Visceral Larva Migrants (VLM). This is a disease of particular risk to children. The eggs are microscopic and can survive for months in fecally contaminated soil. Children pick up the eggs on their fingers when they are playing in the soil/sand. By transferring the eggs to their mouth via their hands the eggs are eventually swallowed. The eggs hatch into worms that migrate through the body into the lungs where they may cause symptoms such as wheezing, coughing, fever and pulmonary infiltration. Sometimes the eggs cause damage by travelling to other body tissues. Someone can also swallow roundworm eggs by eating raw unwashed produce.

How do you prevent Roundworm infections? This worm is not passed by person-to-person contact. Always stop a child from eating dirt or sand or putting dirty objects into their mouths. Wash hands after handling soil and before eating. Cover children's sandboxes when not in use, pick up your pet's waste and deworm your pets beginning at 3 weeks of age.

Hookworms OR Larva Migrans (LAR-va MIGH-granz)

Hookworm is found in humans, dogs and cats. It is more common in tropical and underdeveloped areas where sewage disposal practices allow feces to contaminate the soil. The hookworm eggs will survive in loose, moist soil and hatch to the larval stage. The larvae then penetrate human skin, usually on the foot, producing dermatitis ("ground itch"). The larvae migrate through the bloodstream to the lungs, up the esophagus and are then swallowed into the intestine. The larvae may also be swallowed directly. Larvae become mature worms and lay thousands of eggs per day in the intestine.

How do you prevent Hookworm infections?

This infection is not passed from person to person. Tropical beach-goers are at greatest risk of acquiring this infection because their bare feet are exposed to soil. Travellers should remember to always wear their shoes. Children are also at risk of swallowing the larvae on unwashed hands that have been in contact with contaminated ground. Be sure to deworm your pets.