

Worms!

Threadworm is the most common worm infection and it's estimated that most children will be infected at least once by the time they start high school. Thread worms look like short pieces of white cotton 5-10mm in length.

Threadworms are highly contagious. Younger children usually get infected by the faecal-oral route as the eggs get trapped under finger nails and then ingested when kids put their fingers in their mouths. The eggs can live outside of the body for several weeks and are highly resistant to environmental elements. They will happily live in clothing, carpeting, toys, toilet seats and bed linen, making it easy for contamination to occur.

Signs and Symptoms

Sometimes no symptoms are present, however classic symptoms include—

Night time peri-anal itching due to glue released by the worms to stick the eggs to the skin, restless sleep, irritability, tired and mildly unwell, reduced appetite, teeth grinding and stomach pains.

How can I be sure my kids have worms?

A visual confirmation is the best way to diagnose worms. You can look for threadworms on the surface of bowel motions. Worms move around outside of the anus at night time (around an hour after the child has gone to bed), so you could carefully have a look at the anus at this time. Another way, is to check for eggs in the morning by gently pressing sticky tape over the anus, where any eggs will stick to the tape and can be clearly seen.

Tips to Prevent Re-Infection

Take showers rather than baths, especially in the morning to wash away any eggs that have been laid overnight.

Apply a protective ointment to prevent scratching. Keep fingernails short and clean. Wash hands with soap regularly. Wash bed linen in hot water to kill eggs, instead of simply shaking the linen out. Hot iron linen, towels and clothing. Disinfect common living areas, vacuum bedrooms, furniture and carpeting to remove eggs.

Myths

- Can you get worms from your pets? *No, cats and dogs do not get threadworm, nor can they pass them onto humans. Worms from pets can't be directly passed onto humans. However in rare cases, roundworm from dogs can lay in the soil for up to 3 weeks, and if this is ingested people can be infected.*
- Should I worm my kids regularly? *No, there is no benefit to worm your children if there is no signs of infection.*

Worming Treatment Options

Medicated—A variety of brands available in either chocolate squares, liquid or tablets that work to either paralyse or kill the worms. Usually a single dose is all that is needed to treat the worms.

Natural—VitaKlenz for Kids

A chewable tablet which is a broad spectrum anti-parasitic formula to kill worms. Taken over the course of a month to kill the life cycle of the worms and truly cleanse the body of infection.



Rachel Hulme, Naturopath