

Primary Care Trust Advice-Threadworm

Information on Threadworm

Like head lice, threadworms are a very common problem, particularly in children where they can easily spread from one child to another. It is estimated that 40% of children below the age of 10 years may be infected with threadworms at any one time.

What are threadworms?

Threadworms live in the bowel and around the bottom. They are tiny white worms about half an inch long. The female threadworm lays her eggs at night around the anal region, which can cause an "itchy bottom" in sufferers.

Are they harmful?

Threadworms do not cause serious damage, but they are an irritating problem.

What are the symptoms to look for?

The most common sign is scratching the bottom, especially at night. Other symptoms to look out for are disturbed sleep, tummy aches, irritability, or either a loss of appetite or an unusually large appetite. It is important to note that up to 30% of people infected will not show these classic symptoms, but may still have threadworms.

What to do if you suspect your child has threadworms?

Firstly notify the school. Secondly, go to your pharmacist to ask for treatment which will treat **all** the family. This is important as threadworms can be picked up in clothing, carpets, towels, bed linen and are easily spread at home. It is not necessary to go to your GP for initial treatment, except for children under 2 or if you think you are pregnant.

Preventing the spread of threadworms in the family

The following basic hygiene tips will help the spread of threadworms or re-infection:

- Keep nails short and clean
- Scrub fingers and nails with a nail brush after each visit to the toilet and before each meal
- Do not bite nails
- Wear pyjamas or underwear in bed
- Bath daily, in the morning, paying particular attention to the anal area
- Do not share towels
- Clean toilet seat, toilet handle/chain, door handle and taps regularly
- Wash and iron clothes and bed linen regularly
- Vacuum and dust bedrooms thoroughly

If you would like more information about threadworms please contact your local health care provider.