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CC/RCD

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Dear Parents and Carers

A possible case of threadworm has been reported in school and I would urge you to carefully check your child(ren) for symptoms. I hope the following guidance, from www.nhs.uk is helpful but I would recommend you seek medical assistance if an infestation is suspected.

Threadworms, also known as pinworms, are tiny parasitic worms that hatch eggs in and infect the large intestine of humans.

Threadworms are the most common type of worm infection in the UK, and they are particularly common in young children under the age of 10.

Threadworms are white and look like small pieces of thread. You may notice them around your child's bottom or in your child's stools.

They don't always cause symptoms, but people often notice itchiness around their bottom. This can be worse at night and can sometimes disturb sleep.

When to see your GP

If you think you or your child may have threadworms, you can usually treat the infection yourself with medication available at the pharmacies without prescription.

You only usually need to see your GP if you think you have threadworms and you are pregnant or breastfeeding, or if you think your child has threadworms and they are under two years old. This is because the treatment recommended in these circumstances is usually different to what is recommended for most people.

How are threadworms spread?

Threadworms lay their eggs around an infected person's anus (bottom), usually at night. Along with the eggs, the worm also secretes a mucus that causes itching.

If the eggs get stuck on the person's fingertips when they scratch, they can be transferred to their mouth or onto surfaces and clothes. Other people who touch an infected surface can then transfer the eggs to their mouth.



Threadworm eggs can survive for up to three weeks before hatching. If the eggs hatch, the newly born worms can re-enter the bowel. Eggs that have been swallowed will hatch inside the intestine. After two weeks, the worms reach adult size and begin to reproduce, starting the cycle again.

Treating threadworms

If you or your child has threadworms, everyone in your household will need to be treated because the risk of the infection spreading is high. This includes people without any symptoms of a threadworm infection.

For most people, treatment will involve a single dose of a medication called mebendazole to kill the worms. Another dose can be taken after two weeks, if necessary.

What can be done to control threadworms?

During treatment and for a few weeks afterwards, it is also important to follow strict hygiene measures to avoid spreading the threadworm eggs.

Strict hygiene measures can help clear up a threadworm infection and reduce the likelihood of re-infection.

The life span of threadworms is approximately six weeks, so it's important that the hygiene methods are followed for at least this long. Everyone in the household must follow the advice outlined below.

- **Wash all night clothes, bed linen, towels and soft toys when you are first diagnosed.** This can be done at normal temperatures but make sure that the washing is well rinsed.
- **Thoroughly vacuum and dust the whole house, paying particular attention to the bedrooms.** This should be repeated regularly.
- **Carefully clean the bathroom and kitchen by damp-dusting surfaces and washing the cloth frequently in hot water.** This should be repeated regularly.
- **Avoid shaking any material that may be contaminated with eggs, such as clothing or bed sheets.** This will help prevent eggs being transferred to other surfaces.
- **Don't eat food in the bedroom,** because you may end up swallowing eggs that have been shaken off the bedclothes.
- **Keep your fingernails short.** Encourage other members of your household to do the same.
- **Discourage nail-biting and sucking fingers.** In particular, make sure that children don't suck their thumb.
- **Wash your hands frequently and scrub under your finger nails,** particularly before eating, after going to the toilet and before and after changing your baby's nappy.
- **Wear close-fitting underwear at night and change your underwear every morning.**
- **Bath or shower regularly,** particularly first thing in the morning. Make sure that you clean around your anus and vagina to remove any eggs.
- **Ensure that everyone in your household has their own face flannel and towel.** Don't share towels.
- **Keep toothbrushes in a closed cupboard and rinse them thoroughly before use.**

As well as informing you of the situation, the purpose of this letter is to enable you to seek treatment early if your child is affected and to remind parents of general hygiene, in particular to make sure that your child/children wash their hands regularly, particularly after going to the toilet and especially before eating.

Children with threadworm do not need to be kept away from school as long as the child is treated and is aware of the hygiene measures required. However, could you please inform the school as soon as possible if you have a case of threadworm in the family home.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Carr
Head Teacher