

## Pinworms

Pinworms (*Enterobius vermicularis*) are small, whitish worms about one centimetre long that live in the human digestive tract. Among roundworms, they are the most common cause of infection, particularly among school-aged children.

The most common symptoms of an infestation is severe itching around the anus, especially at night. The itching occurs because the fertilized female lays her eggs in the skin folds around the anus.

A person becomes infected when they ingest pinworm eggs. When a person with pinworms scratches their anus, the eggs get under their fingernails, on their hands, in their underwear, and on their bedding. From there, they are transferred to food, other objects, and furniture. Eggs are also found in house dust and are carried on the fur of pets, though pets themselves do not become infected. Outside the host, eggs remain infectious for up to three weeks. They thrive particularly well in humid environments. High temperatures destroy them (above 55 °C).

### PREVENTION OF PINWORM INFECTIONS

#### 1. Personal hygiene

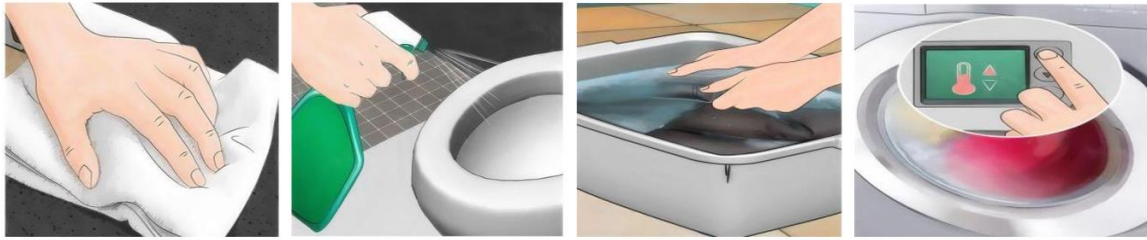
- Thoroughly washing hands with warm running water after using the toilet, after changing diapers, and before preparing meals;
- Cleaning and trimming fingernails;
- Showering daily (not bathing);
- Supervise the child to ensure they do not bite their nails, suck their fingers, or scratch around the anus (cotton gloves can be used at night).



Source: <https://www.wikihow.com/Get-Rid-of-Pinworms>.

#### 2. Stricter enforcement of general hygiene in living spaces

- The areas where the patient spends time, especially restrooms, must be vacuumed, ventilated, and cleaned daily;
- Standard cleaning products may be used for cleaning;
- Items that the patient uses or touches regularly (toys, personal hygiene items, doorknobs, light switches, faucets, etc.) must be cleaned daily;
- Washing hands thoroughly after cleaning the rooms;
- Laundry and bedding should be washed and/or dried at high temperatures (above 55 °C);
- Plush toys should be machine-washed, and if possible, infected children should not use them during treatment.



Source: <https://www.wikihow.com/Get-Rid-of-Pinworms>.

### 3. Treatment of individuals infected with pinworms and their family members

The infection is treated with antimicrobial drugs that target pinworms. Two equivalent drugs are available in Slovenia: mebendazole and albendazole. One of these drugs is prescribed by a doctor on a “green” prescription; mebendazole and albendazole are not available over the counter. After two weeks, treatment is repeated.

The infection spreads easily among family members, so it is important that all family members over the age of one take the medication at the same time. The dosing regimen is the same as for the patient – a single dose of mebendazole or albendazole, repeated after 14 days. The doctor treating the patient prescribes the medication for family members.

Mebendazole and albendazole are not suitable for treating children under one year of age.

Mebendazole may have harmful effects on pregnancy and/or the foetus. Mebendazole is contraindicated during the first trimester of pregnancy; thereafter, risks cannot be ruled out. Pregnant women should take medication only if the benefit to the mother outweighs the risk for the baby. Breastfeeding mothers should not take mebendazole.\*

The use of albendazole is also not recommended during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

Babies under one year of age rarely become infected with pinworm as long as they are breastfed and do not crawl or put objects in their mouths. In addition, parents or caregivers ensure good hygiene for the baby; the area around the baby’s bottom is kept very clean, as caregivers hygienically clean it with every diaper change.

\*Under certain conditions, breastfeeding mothers may still take their prescribed medication by feeding their baby with appropriate breast milk substitutes on the day they take the tablet, and by pumping and discharging their own milk.

The biological half-life of mebendazole (i.e., the time it takes for half of the substance to be eliminated from the body) is short (1.4 to 5.5 hours); it is primarily excreted from the body in the faeces in an unchanged form, with 2% excreted in the urine.



Adapted from: <https://www.wikihow.com/Get-Rid-of-Pinworms>.