

Pinworms

Pinworm is a white worm about one centimeter in length. Pinworms are parasites that are not dangerous to humans, but can be bothersome. Pinworm infections are very common among children of daycare age, but also older children and adults can be infected.

A typical symptom of a pinworm infection is itching around the anal area, especially at night. A pinworm infection can also occur without symptoms.

Transmission

Pinworms are transmitted when you swallow the eggs of a worm. Female worms crawl from the large intestine to the anus to lay eggs. The eggs are spread between people from hand to hand and also via surfaces or bed linen. The eggs can remain infectious for several days, even weeks.

If a person develops symptoms consistent with a pinworm infection, treatment can be started without a visit to the doctor. Health care services should be contacted if you are not sure whether it is a case of pinworms.

Pinworm infections are prevented with good hand and toilet hygiene. Nails should be kept short. Avoid nail biting and finger foods, as well as sleeping in the same bed linen with the pinworm carrier.

Treatment

A pinworm infection is treated with a pyviniium embonate preparation available at pharmacies without prescription. People living in the same household (including those without symptoms) and sleeping in the same bed linen should be treated at the same time. Everybody repeats the treatment after 14 days.

After medicinal treatment

- on the day after the medicinal treatment, wash bed linen, underwear, towels, as well as clothing and plush toys used in bed
- change underwear daily

Normal weekly cleaning is sufficient (vacuuming the rooms and thoroughly wiping the surfaces, door handles and taps in the toilet).

The infection is reported to the people that have slept in the same bed linen as well as to the child's daycare or school. A child that has been diagnosed with pinworms does not have to be kept out of daycare or school.

If the symptoms are prolonged, you should contact health care services.

More instructions on the website of the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) <https://thl.fi/fi/web/infektiotaudit-ja-rokotukset/taudit-ja-torjunta/taudit-ja-taudinaiheuttajat-a-o/kihomato> and the Health Library (Terveyskirjasto) <https://www.terveyskirjasto.fi/dlk00427>
See also Infections and Daycare in the Health Library <https://www.terveyskirjasto.fi/dlk01200>