

# Worms in childhood

Threadworms, also called pinworms, are tiny, very thin white worms about 5 millimetres long that live in the intestine and around the anus (bottom). They are very common and widespread in Australia and are easily treated. Although people of any age can get them, children are the most susceptible with the infection spread through worm eggs on contaminated surfaces. Infection with other worms such as roundworms, hookworms and tapeworms is less common.

## Signs and Symptoms:

- The main sign of threadworms is an itchy bottom. Sometimes children feel 'out of sorts' and do not want to eat much.
- Threadworms do not cause major health problems, and are usually not the cause of tummy pain.
- Scratching of the bottom can cause a red rash around the anus, which can sometimes become infected.
- In girls they can move into the vagina, causing itching and a vaginal discharge.
- Occasionally adult worms can be seen on a person's poo.
- If you look carefully at the child's bottom, around the opening (anus), you can sometimes see the worms there, especially when the child first gets up in the morning.

## Treatment:

Treatment usually involves a single dose of syrup/pill for the infected person and each family member at the same time. You can buy worm treatment from pharmacies, without a prescription. It is not necessary to treat children on a regular basis, just in case they have worms.

Wash clothes, pyjamas, sheets and pillow cases in hot water. Do not shake the sheets when you take them off the bed and disinfect the toilet seat often with antiseptic cleaner.

Treating threadworms does not prevent them coming back, so make sure that all family members are treated, and that the family are careful with hygiene practices (especially hand washing). Keep children's fingernails short.

## Other resources:

- Department of Health, South Australia [Worms](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/Public+Content/SA+Health+Internet/Health+topics/Health+conditions+prevention+and+treatment+including+symptoms+treatment+and+prevention) (<http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/Public+Content/SA+Health+Internet/Health+topics/Health+conditions+prevention+and+treatment+including+symptoms+treatment+and+prevention>)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US) Fact sheet [Enterobiasis](http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/pinworm/index.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/pinworm/index.html>) (also known as pinworm infection)
- [Pinworms - Better Health Channel](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/pinworms) (<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/pinworms>), Victoria
- Department of Health, Western Australia [Threadworms](http://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/S_T/Threadworms) ([http://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/S\\_T/Threadworms](http://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/S_T/Threadworms))

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