NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL℠

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PINWORMS: TREATMENT AND PREVENTION

Pinworms are small white worms about 1/2 inch long and as thin as a thread. They can sometimes be seen in and around the child's bowel movements. These worms live in the large intestine. The adult female worm crawls out of the rectal opening at night and lays her eggs on the skin around the anus. This causes itching and scratching. The worms can also move to the vagina of a female child and cause itching.

HOW THE INFECTION IS SPREAD

When the child scratches, tiny eggs can be picked up on the fingers and then transferred to his mouth. This causes the infection to start over again in the intestine. Eggs can be found in house dust, on toilet seats, bed linens, and play areas in or outside the home.

Picture 1 Good hand washing is a MUST!

HOW TO TREAT THE INFECTION

- Your doctor will prescribe a special medicine to treat pinworm infection.
- Read the label on the bottle of medicine and give it as directed by your doctor. Usually the medicine is given as a one-time dose. Sometimes the doctor will order the medicine to be repeated in 2 to 3 weeks, especially if symptoms continue.
- If your child vomits shortly after taking the medicine, give the same amount of medicine after one hour one more time. If vomiting continues, call your child's doctor.
- Your doctor will also treat other family members with medicine.
- If other family members are being treated, they should all be given the medicine at the same time.
- **Store medicine out of the reach of children.**

HOW TO PREVENT REINFECTION

The following things should be done until the child and family members are free of infection. Start when the medicine is first given and continue for about one week. Continue to practice good hand washing and good housekeeping even after the pinworms are gone.

- **Hand washing is very important.** Have your child and all family members wash their hands in the morning, before meals, and after using the toilet. (Picture 1) This is a good habit **all** the time.
- Keep your child's fingernails cut as short as possible.
- Tie mittens or socks over your child's hands at night. This will keep him from scratching and getting pinworm eggs under his fingernails.
- One-piece pajamas should be worn at night if possible.

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HOW TO PREVENT REINFECTION (Continued)

- Clean the rectal opening after each bowel movement with soap and water. Use clean washcloths or paper towels each time.
- Scrub the toilet seat daily with disinfectant or soap and water (Picture 2).
- Change bed linens and put clean clothes on the child every day.
- Wash used bed linen, all clothing, towels, and washcloths in hot water with detergent daily.
- Vacuum carpets and floors well.
- Scrub washable areas. Vacuum or brush upholstered furniture. Change the vacuum cleaner bag daily and seal it before throwing it away.
- Other household members may also need to be treated.
- Before eating any raw vegetables or fruits, wash them thoroughly to remove any eggs or worms.
- Make sure children wear shoes when they are outside. This will keep them from carrying into the house any worms or eggs that live in the soil.
- Call your child's school or child care center so that they can take extra care with linens and hand washing. Your child may return to school or child care 24 hours after treatment.

Picture 2 Scrub toilets daily with a household disinfectant.

WHEN TO CALL YOUR DOCTOR

- If pinworms are seen.
- If the skin around the anus becomes red or tender.
- If anal itching lasts more than one week.

If you have any questions, be sure to ask your doctor or nurse or call _____.