

For more information about **Threadworms** contact:

The Community Infection Prevention & Control Nurse

Or

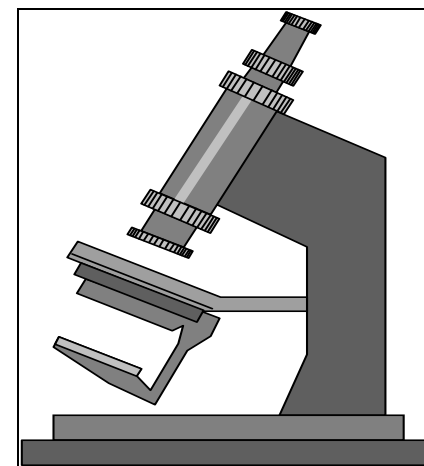
Your local Health Protection Unit

Or

<http://www.hpa.org.uk/topics>



HPA North West



Information produced by collaboration between:

The Health Protection Agency North West,

North West Infection Prevention & Control Nurses

And

North West Environmental Health Officers.

Threadworms

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INFORMATION LEAFLET

What are Threadworms?

They are tiny white worms about 2 - 3mm long which infect the bowel and lay their eggs on the skin around the anus / back passage.

Who can they affect?

ANYONE – they are the most common worm infection in the UK and are common in young children.

How do you know you have Threadworms?

- They can be seen in the faeces/stools/motions
- They look like short threads of white cotton or grains of white rice.
- They cause itching around the anus / back passage and the surrounding skin.
- Disturbed sleep due to itching.

How do you treat Threadworms?

- The doctor will prescribe a medicine to get rid of them, or your community pharmacist will advise on an appropriate treatment that you can purchase over the counter.
- **The whole family should be treated at the same time** as other members may be infected without symptoms – this will prevent re-infection occurring.

How is Threadworm infection spread??

- When a person has threadworms they may get eggs on their hands and under their finger nails, when they scratch their anus/back passage or when wiping themselves after going to the toilet.

- If hands and nails are not properly washed the eggs may be passed onto other people.
- Once eaten, they get into the bowel causing a cycle of re-infection.
- From contaminated bed linen, night clothing, flannels and towels.
- Occasionally from contaminated carpets.

How do you prevent spread?

- By keeping fingernails short and clean.
- By washing the bedding of all infected persons daily.
- By an infected person washing their hands thoroughly with soap and warm water including under their finger nails:
 - **after** going to the toilet
 - **after** scratching their anus / back passage
 - **before** preparing, serving or eating food
- By using individual towels and flannels
- By teaching and encouraging children to wash their hands with soap and warm water.

Threadworms are generally not harmful but are a nuisance and can be upsetting and uncomfortable for the person infected.

Do you need to stay off work or school?

- Once an infection is found it should be treated immediately, but it is **not** necessary to stay off work or school.
- The nursery or school should be informed of any threadworm infection as they may need to take action to prevent spread within the premises.