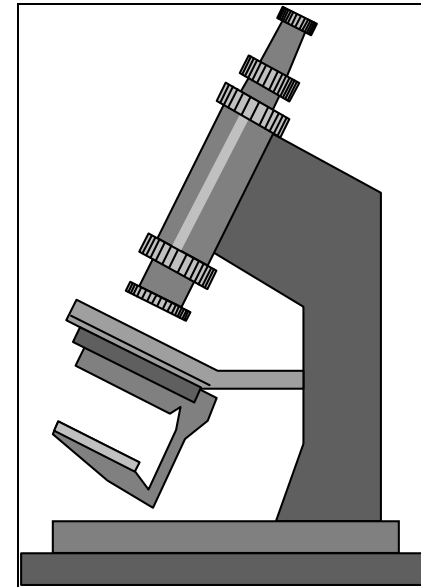


For more information about **Threadworms** contact:

*The Community Infection Control Nurse at your  
local Primary Care Trust (PCT)  
or your local Health Protection Unit*

# HPA North West



# Threadworms

Information produced by: Health Protection Agency North West

The Health Protection Agency is a new independent organisation dedicated to protecting people's health. It brings together the expertise formerly in a number of official organisations.

Date: September 2005

Review Date: September 2007



Website: <http://www.hpa-nw.org.uk/>

**INFORMATION LEAFLET**

### What are Threadworms?

They are tiny white worms about 2mm 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 surprisingly common in young children.

### How do you know you have Threadworms?

- They can be seen in the stools/motions
- They look like short threads of white cotton or grains of white rice.
- They cause excessive 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.
- The whole family should be treated at the same time as they may have been passed on in the family – this will prevent re-infection occurring.

### How are Threadworms caught?

- When a person has threadworms they 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 clean the eggs then get into food or in the mouth and get eaten.

- Once eaten, they get into the bowel and start to lay eggs causing a cycle of re-infection.
- From contaminated bed linen, night clothing (pyjamas), flannels and towels.
- From infected pets (dogs and cats should be regularly treated for worms).
- Occasionally from contaminated carpets.

### How do you prevent spread?

- By keeping fingernails short.
- By changing the sheets of an infected person daily.
- By thorough hand washing with soap and warm water and scrubbing finger nails:-
  - after going to the toilet
  - after scratching your anus/back passage
  - before preparing, serving or eating food
- By using separate towels and flannels
- By teaching and encouraging children to have good standards of hygiene
- By not allowing dogs and cats to foul play areas, sand pits, etc.

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.