

## Introduction

- > Worldwide, several worm varieties exist that can infest the intestinal tract of people
- > The most common worm in Australia is *Enterobius vermicularis* (pinworm) and is more commonly seen in children
- > Infection with other worms such as roundworms, hookworms and tapeworms is uncommon in Australia

## *Enterobius vermicularis* (pinworm)

- > Pinworms are about 10 mm by 0.7 mm and inhabit the terminal ileum, caecum, appendix, and proximal ascending colon of humans
- > The female worm migrates to the rectum after copulation, and if not expelled during defecation, migrates to the perineum (usually at night), where an average of 11,000 eggs are released

## Clinical symptoms

- > Anal and vulval pruritus
- > Restless sleeping due to pruritus
- > Evidence of worm in faeces

## Route of transmission

- > Faecal oral contamination
- > Reinfection may occur by hand to oral transfer of eggs (after scratching) from the faeces / perineal region of an infected person
- > Person to person transmission can also occur through handling of contaminated clothes or bed linen
- > Contact with surfaces that are contaminated with pinworm eggs (e.g. curtains, carpets)

## Incubation period

- > After ingestion, eggs usually hatch in the duodenum within 6 hours. Worms mature at around two weeks and have a life span of approximately 2 months
- > Symptoms and infection are associated with high worm numbers, resulting from repeated infections

## Infection precautions

- > Standard precautions

## Treatment

### **Preventative measures**

- > Encourage good hand washing

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- > Change bed linen and underwear daily for several days after treatment. Normal hot washing of clothes and bed linen will kill pinworm eggs

## **Drug treatment**

### First line treatment

- > Pyrantel oral tablets in a single dose depending on weight (ADEC Category B2)

### Second line treatment

- > Mebendazole (ADEC Category B3)

## Reference

1. Center for Disease Control (CDC). Pinworm infection. Fact sheet. Division of Parasitic Diseases. 1999 August [cited 2004 May 20]; [3 screens]. Available from: URL: [http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/pinworm/factsht\\_pinworm.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/pinworm/factsht_pinworm.htm)

## Useful websites

E-Medicine – Enterobiasis. Available from URL:  
<http://www.emedicine.com/ped/topic684.htm>

South Australian Department of Health. You've got what – Worms. Available from URL:  
<http://www.dh.sa.gov.au/pehs/Youve-got-what/ygw-worms.pdf>

## Version control and change history

### **PDS reference:** OCE use only

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1.0	19 May 04	25 Jan 10	Original version
2.0	25 Jan 10	Current	