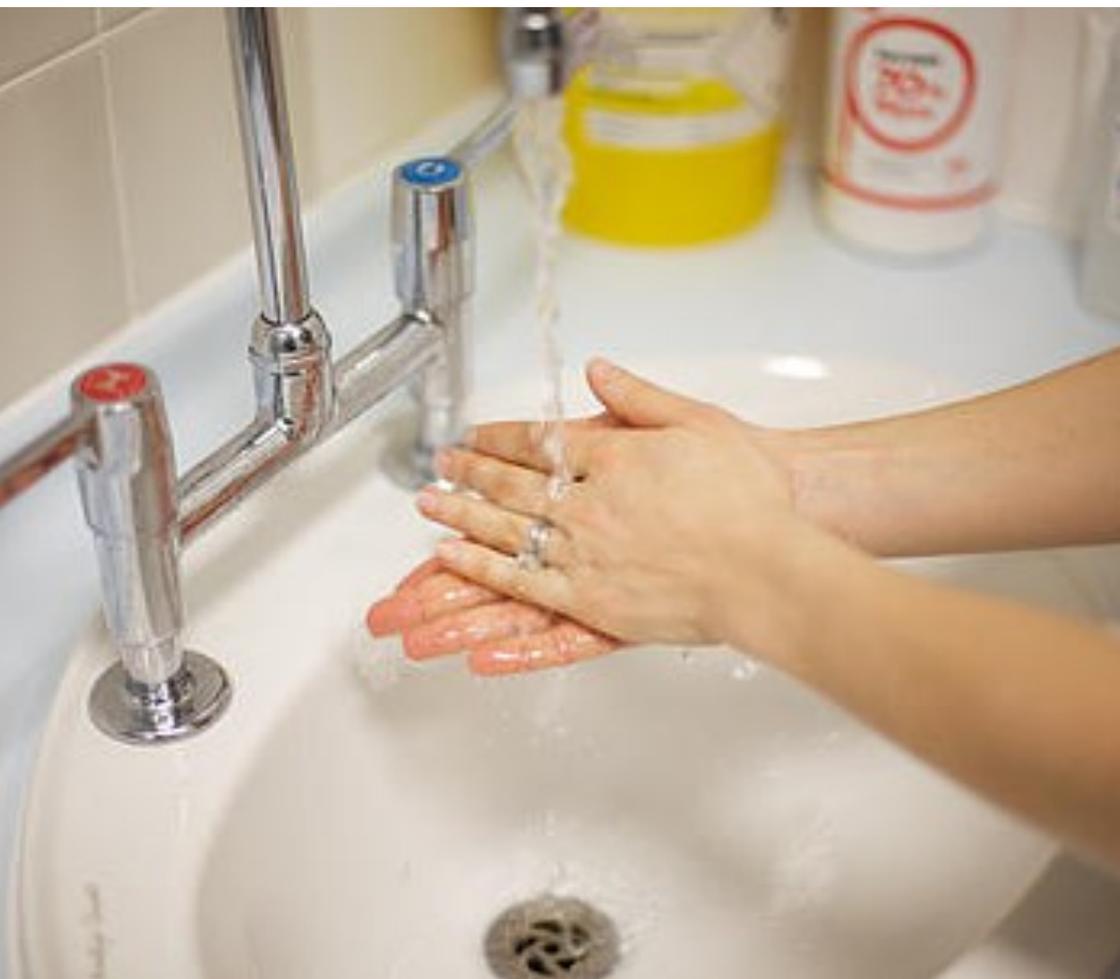




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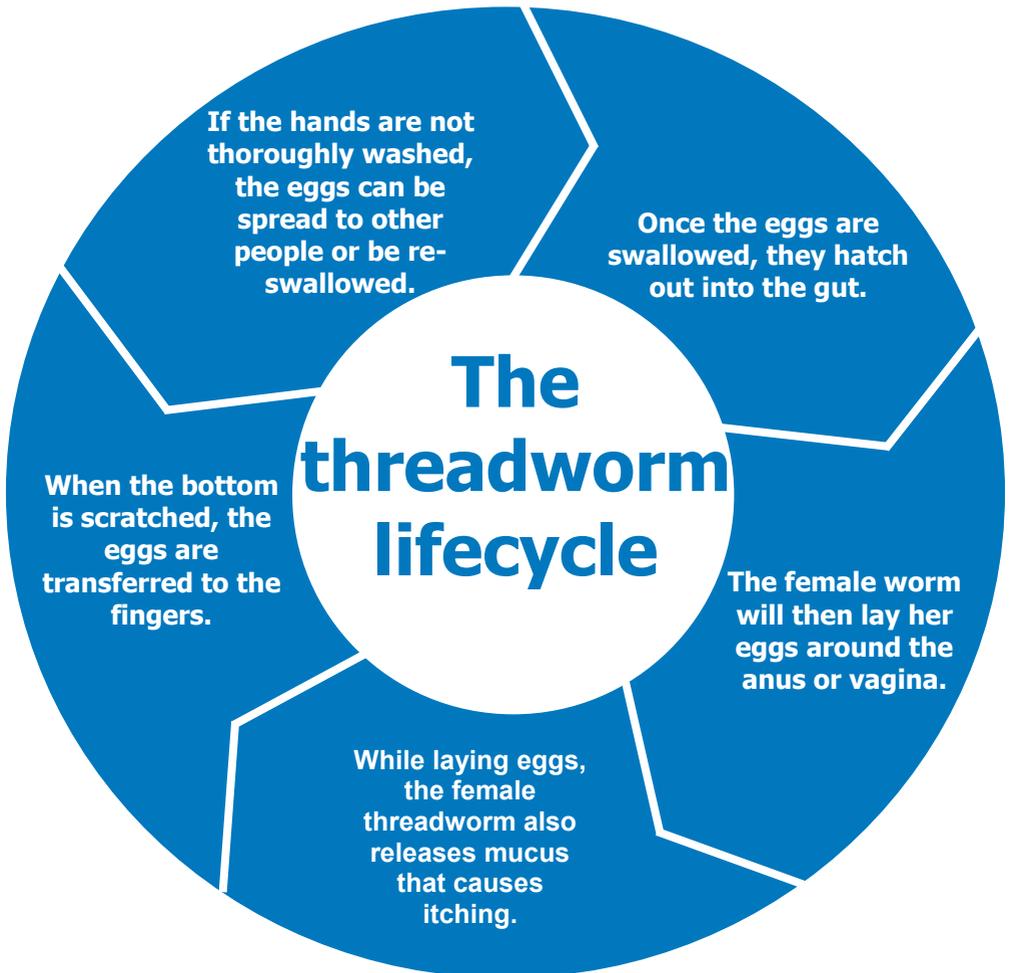
*Ipswich and East Suffolk
Clinical Commissioning Group*

Self-care information on threadworm



What are threadworms?

Threadworms (also known as pinworms) are small, thin, white, thread-like worms between 2 mm and 13 mm long. The infection occurs in your gut (intestine) and begins when threadworm eggs are swallowed.



- Intense itching around the anus (or the vagina in girls), particularly at night.
- Disturbed sleep as a result of the itching, which can lead to irritability.

Severe or persistent threadworm infections can cause:

- Loss of appetite
- Weight loss
- Skin infection (if bacteria get into the scratches caused by itching)
- Difficulty getting to sleep or staying asleep
- Bedwetting

Looking for threadworms

Threadworms are difficult to see because of their size and colour. The best time to try to find threadworms is at night when female worms come out to lay their eggs. If you are trying to see whether your child has threadworms, check about two to three hours after they have fallen asleep. The worms may be visible on your child's night clothes or bed sheets.

Threadworms can sometimes also be found in stools (faeces). Threadworm eggs are not visible to the naked eye.

How do you treat threadworms?

To successfully treat threadworms, all household members must be treated, even if they have no symptoms. The aim of treatment is to get rid of the threadworms and prevent re-infection. This will usually involve a combination of medication to kill the worms and strict hygiene measures to stop the spread of the eggs.

Hygiene method

Strict hygiene measures can help clear up a threadworm infection and reduce the likelihood of re-infection.

The lifespan of threadworms is approximately six weeks, so it is important that the hygiene measures are followed for at least six weeks. Everyone in the household must follow the advice outlined below.

- Wash all night clothes, bed linen, towels and soft toys when you are first diagnosed. This can be done at normal temperatures but make sure that the washing is well rinsed.
- Thoroughly vacuum and dust the whole house, paying particular attention to the bedrooms. Continue to vacuum regularly and thoroughly.
- Carefully clean the bathroom and kitchen by damp-dusting surfaces and washing the cloth frequently in hot water. Continue to clean bathroom and kitchen surfaces regularly and thoroughly.
- Avoid shaking any material that may be contaminated with eggs, such as clothing or bed sheets. This will help prevent eggs being transferred to other surfaces.
- Do not eat food in the bedroom, because you may end up swallowing eggs that have been shaken off the bedclothes.
- Keep your fingernails short. Encourage other members of your household to do the same.
- Discourage nail-biting and sucking fingers. In particular, make sure that children do not suck their thumb.

- Wash your hands frequently and scrub under your fingernails, particularly before eating, after going to the toilet and before and after changing your baby's nappy.
- Wear close-fitting underwear at night and change your underwear every morning.
- Bath or shower regularly, particularly first thing in the morning. Make sure that you clean around your anus and vagina to remove any eggs.
- Ensure that everyone in your household has their own face flannel and towel. Do not share towels.
- Keep toothbrushes in a closed cupboard and rinse them thoroughly before use.

Children can easily pick up another threadworm infection from friends or at school, so maintaining good hygiene may help prevent another outbreak.

Medication

Mebendazole (single dose) is the main medication used to treat threadworm infections. It can be bought over the counter from your local pharmacy and is available as a chewable tablet or a liquid. Your pharmacist will be able to advise you if this treatment is suitable for you and your family. Thread worm medication is very effective at killing the threadworms but it does not kill the eggs therefore the hygiene measures listed on page three must also be followed for six weeks.

You should always follow the dosage information in the patient information leaflet that comes with the medicine.

There is no need to stay off work or school if you or your child has a threadworm infection. However, you should inform staff at your child's school or nursery so they can take steps to prevent the spread of infection, such as cleaning toys and equipment and encouraging children to wash their hands regularly.



- You think that you have a skin infection in the area around the anus
- If your child is less than 2 years old
- If the infection continues after two treatments
- You are pregnant or breastfeeding

If you need any further information:

- Ask your pharmacist
- NHS Choices - www.nhs.uk
- Patient UK - www.patient.co.uk

