



# UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

## UNIVERSITY HEALTH CENTER

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## Pinworm Infection

Pinworm infections are the most common type of intestinal parasite infections, especially in temperate climates. The infecting agent is a very small worm measuring only 10 millimeters in its adult form. This makes it barely visible to the naked eye.

### Symptoms

Pinworms live in the rectum. The female emerges at night and secretes a sticky and irritating substance around the anus into which she lays her eggs. This causes itching around the rectal area, usually the only symptom of a pinworm infection.

### Transmission

Infection is transmitted from person to person or by inhalation of airborne eggs. It is not transmitted by household pets. Re-infection can occur when a person scratches the anal region and then transfers the eggs back to the mouth. Sometimes the eggs are transferred to an inanimate object where they may later cause infection.

**Because pinworms are so highly contagious, it is necessary to treat others who live with the infected person, such as roommates or family members. It is important that all infected persons receive treatment at the same time to prevent reinfection.**

### Diagnosis

Diagnosis is made by visualizing the eggs or worms under a microscope. You may be asked to perform a "scotch tape" slide test or use a "swab paddle" at home and bring the slide to the University Health Center for examination.

### Treatment

*Vermox*: For control of pinworm, a single tablet of Vermox is taken. The tablet may be swallowed, crushed, or chewed.

*Povan*: Povan comes in a liquid suspension and in tablets. The dose is based on body weight, so each person may need to take a different amount of liquid or number of tablets. Therefore, do not try to treat an infected roommate yourself; ask your practitioner to calculate the dose. Both tablets and the liquid will turn your bowel movement bright red. The liquid is very staining so be careful not to spill any on your clothing.

Sometimes it is necessary to have a second dose of the medication in 2-3 weeks.

General treatment measures to follow:

- Wash your hands and fingernails frequently with soap, especially before eating and after using the toilet.
- Keep toilet seats clean.
- Bed linens, night clothes, and towels should be laundered using hot water and a mild bleach solution.
- Change underwear daily.
- For several days after treatment, vacuum or damp mop the bedroom floor.
- Avoid placing your fingers or other possibly contaminated objects into your mouth.

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**Published for the University of Maryland community.**

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