

Worms in Children. How to Treat and Avoid them.

By Natalie Ebrill

Thread worms are thriving everyday in little children and affecting their daily activities and causing sleepless nights for many families. It's not a nice experience but easily identified and treated. I am frequently finding worms a problem for our little pre-school aged non-sleepers and mum and dad are horrified. Worms are spread very easily in the community across all social backgrounds and generations. They are spread most commonly in pre-schoolers' because in my experience the only things toddlers share are love and germs and this age group are not always efficient at hand washing, particularly before eating.

How do we identify a child with worms?

*An infected child has an itchy bottom! They will naturally be very irritable during the day, frustrated, uncooperative, fidgety, not be able to sit still, cannot concentrate, argumentative and angry. This is the most common reason for climbing out of the cot.

*You might suspect someone performed a personality transplant on your little angel!

*They want to scratch their bottom and will commonly be seen taking their clothes or nappy off

*They will walk strangely like they are trying to keep a coin safely between their buttocks and having trouble (imagine)

*They will frequently urinate and or wet the bed at night

*They will not be able to go to sleep and not be able to explain why to you, but will be crying and uncomfortable, not naughty

What to look for

*If you suspect worms, look for a pinky/red rash about 2cm wide completely around the outside of the genital area

*If you wish to look for worms, keep the room dark, ask for your partners help, comfort the child and 'spring' a torch light onto the exposed bottom. In a dark room. The worms come out at night to lay eggs. This process creates the uncomfortableness and irritability. So in the night time only, you will see 1cm long wriggling pieces of white sewing cotton, moving fast

away from the light, around the anal passage. In girls the worms can crawl into the vagina and be even more irritable.

How to get rid of them

*Firstly, collect as many worms as you can see immediately and dispose of them down the toilet. Your child will feel calmer after the worms have been removed from the skin.

*If you have a daughter and you suspect they are in the vaginal area, you can very gently slightly spread open the outer labia (flaps of skin) and if you see any worms, gently roll them onto a cotton bud (q tip). Tissues and cotton balls are too large and you won't be able to see what you are doing. (personal experience) This will provide immediate relief from the irritation of the worms trying to lay eggs in this sensitive area.

*Apply a thick layer of Vaseline to the anal area to provide temporary relief to the skin and catch any worms that come out again in the night.

*Wash in hot water and use the dryer or hot sun on all linen, towels and clothing worn by the child. Repeat for the whole family. The worms can live outside the body long enough to infect everyone.

*There are a variety of medications to offer your family. There are one dose liquids, chewable tablets and chocolate squares, please do the whole family the day you find the worms and then again seven days later in case of re-infestation See your pharmacist for the appropriate dose and the minimum age.

*It's a good idea to keep the medication in your medicine cupboard (personal experience), it will be late at night that you discover them, the shops will be closed and no-one can sleep if anyone else has worms crawling out of their bottom!

*Please inform your pre-school/daycare centre if your child has them (even anonymously if embarrassed) so that other families can be on the look out for them and the centre's can be more proactive with hygiene and symptoms in other children. Always think about whether you would appreciate the warning if another child had worms and played with your child. Give them a copy of this article to distribute to other families.

How do children get worms?

*Through their mouth

*The worms come out at night to lay their eggs in the soft tissue around the anal passage, this causes the skin irritation.

*The child scratches their bottom because it's itchy

*The eggs get under the finger nails and are spread onto everything the child touches: toys, toilets, taps, towels, pencils, chairs, food, other children etc...

*The next child/person touches the same objects and then....doesn't wash their hands before eating or touching the face and they swallow them.

Tip: The simplest form of infection control used in hospitals everyday that prevents doctors and nurses from catching all of the bugs in the hospitals is **HAND WASHING**. Make it a family routine that no-one eats before they have washed and thoroughly dried their hands. Encourage this at pre-school and day care as well. If we start young enough the children will think it as normal as cleaning their teeth before bed or kissing you good bye. It is up to us as parents to start and lead by example with these sensible habits.

© 2012 Natalie Ebrill- Sleep and Settle- Baby Sleep Consultant newborns-5 yrs

RN, Child and Family Health Nurse. Mother of three.

I want to give you your life back! Would you appreciate being empowered with an understanding of your baby's needs and a gentle strategy that you apply to your baby/toddler's personality? Do you feel like you've read everything and nothing is working?

Visit <http://www.sleepandsettle.com.au> for my free report "Sleeping Baby Secrets" and newsletter for parents who love their sleep.