



# Threadworms

Patient information leaflet



GIG  
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Common Ailments Service

**Only use this leaflet if your pharmacist has advised you about your or your child's condition.**

Threadworms (also called pinworms) are tiny worms that infect the gut. They lay eggs around the anus (back passage) causing itching that is usually worse at night. You may see the worms in your poo - they look like pieces of white thread. The itch may make you or your child irritable and interfere with sleep.

Anyone can get threadworms, but they are most common in children. Threadworm infection spreads easily when the eggs are swallowed. The eggs can survive for up to 2 weeks outside your body. When you scratch, eggs get on to your fingers and under your nails. The eggs may then settle on other objects.

Children can still go to school or nursery while they have a threadworm infection.



## Treatment and Prevention

### Medicines that can help

**These medicines are not suitable for everyone. Make sure you have asked your pharmacist for advice about what treatment is best for you or your child.**

Threadworms are unlikely to go away by themselves and usually need treatment.

Your pharmacist may recommend a medicine called **mebendazole** that comes as chewable tablets or an oral suspension. Mebendazole works by killing the worms in the gut but does not kill their eggs.

Household members over 6 months old, including those without symptoms, should take 1 dose of mebendazole at the same time. They may need another dose 2 weeks after the first dose if the infection has not cleared. Mebendazole is not suitable for people who are pregnant or breastfeeding.

Mebendazole is used widely in people over 6 months old but the manufacturer's licence does not include children under 2 years. This means that using it is "off-label" in children under 2 years of age. More information about using medicines off-label to treat children can be found on the Medicines for Children website: <https://www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk/advice-guides/general-advice-for-medicines/unlicensed-medicines/>

**Always read the patient information leaflet that comes with your medicine.**

If you are concerned about any side effects from a treatment, report it to a doctor, nurse or pharmacist. You can also report side effects on the Yellow Card [app](#) or [website](#).

### Self-care at home

As well as taking mebendazole you will need to use hygiene measures for at least 2 weeks to get rid of the threadworm eggs and avoid spreading them.

If mebendazole treatment is not suitable for you, use hygiene measures, specified in step 3, for at least 6 weeks instead.



# Treatment and Prevention

## Hygiene measures

### Step 1, on day 1 (treatment day):

- change and wash bedlinen, sleepwear and soft toys at hot temperatures
- vacuum all the rooms in your house, especially the bedrooms
- vacuum the mattresses
- disinfect kitchen and bathroom surfaces
- dust every room well with a damp cloth, rinsing it in hot water frequently as you dust, then throw it away

When cleaning, do not shake clothes and bedding because they might have threadworm eggs on them.

### Step 2, for several days after day 1:

- change and wash bedlinen, sleepwear and soft toys at hot temperatures

### Step 3, for 2 to 6 weeks (depending on whether mebendazole treatment has been taken) everyone in the household should:

- wear close-fitting underwear at night to prevent scratching
- wash around the anus as soon as they get up to get rid of any eggs laid during the night

### To prevent getting threadworms again, everyone in the household should:

- wash their hands and scrub under their nails first thing in the morning, after using the toilet or changing nappies, and before eating or cooking
- try not to bite their nails or suck their fingers
- keep their fingernails short
- avoid scratching around their bottom
- avoid sharing towels or flannels
- keep toothbrushes in a closed cupboard and rinse them well before use



## When to Get Help

If you are worried that your or your child's condition is not getting better, or is getting worse, talk to your GP.



## More information

For more information on threadworms or a medicine, talk to your pharmacist or look at the following websites:

NHS: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/threadworms/>

Patient UK: <https://patient.info/skin-conditions/itchy-bottom-pruritus-ani/threadworms>

Medicines A-Z: <https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/>

Information from the above resources is included in this leaflet.



Mae'r daflen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This leaflet is also available in Welsh.

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