

## GASTROINTESTINAL TRACT INFECTIONS

### Threadworms (*Enterobius vermicularis*)

**Threadworms is a condition that should be treated over the counter and is on the NHSE [list](#) of conditions for which OTC items should NOT routinely be prescribed in primary care.**

Threadworm or pinworm is a parasitic worm which infests the human gut and transmission occurs by the faeco-oral route when threadworm eggs are ingested.

Symptoms usually include intense perianal itching which is typically worse at night.

Some people may be asymptomatic and only become aware of infection when small white thread-like worms (which may be slowly moving) are seen on the perianal skin or in the stools.

In people with a female genital tract, the genital area can also be involved, and presentation may include pruritus vulvae.

#### **Treatment:**

**Patients should be advised to implement hygiene measures and if treatment is required/appropriate, to purchase a suitable product over the counter (adults and children over 2 years).**

- Patient information leaflet: [Threadworms](#)
- Treat all household contacts at the same time, even if asymptomatic (unless contraindicated).
- Treat with a single dose of mebendazole (unless contraindicated) — followed by a repeat dose after 14 days.
- Initial dose kills adult worms but does not affect eggs. The eggs may hatch in the 2-week interval, and the second dose will kill the newly emerged worms breaking the lifecycle.
- Threadworms are self-limiting if the patient can avoid re-infection for 6 weeks. If there are frequent recurrences despite repeat treatment with mebendazole, consider seeking advice from a paediatrician or a consultant in infectious diseases.
- Advise rigorous hygiene measures for 2 weeks if treated with mebendazole or 6 weeks if using hygiene measures alone:
  - Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water after using the toilet, changing nappies and before eating and handling food.
  - Cut fingernails regularly, avoid biting nails and scratching around the anus. Clean underneath nails with a brush once a day or after passing stools.
  - Shower each morning, including the perianal area, to remove eggs from the skin.
  - Change bed linen and nightwear daily (wear pants, or tightfitting nightwear in bed, consider wearing cotton gloves at night to avoid scratching) for several days after treatment.
  - Do not shake out items as this may distribute eggs around the room.
  - Washing/drying in a hot cycle (>60°C) will kill threadworm eggs. Hot wash sheets initially and then at least weekly in the morning, do not shake before washing. Fluffy toys in bed should be hot washed.
  - Thoroughly dust and vacuum (including vacuuming mattresses) and clean the bathroom by 'damp-dusting' surfaces, washing the cloth frequently in hot water. Regularly clean surfaces.
  - Do not share towels or co-bathe. Regularly change towels.
- No exclusion from nursery or school is required

**Mebendazole is contraindicated in pregnancy, breastfeeding and children <6 months**, advise to observe hygiene measures for 6 weeks, aiming to break the re-infection cycle. For children younger than 3 months, add perianal wet wiping or washes three hourly.

Medicine <sup>1</sup>	Dosage	Duration	Comments
Mebendazole	Adult and child ≥6 months: <b>100mg</b>	<b>STAT DOSE</b> followed by <b>second STAT</b> dose after 14 days.	Under 2 years old, need to be prescribed off-label. Community practitioner nurse prescribers can only prescribe for over 2 years old.
<sup>1</sup> See <a href="#">BNF</a> for appropriate use and dosing in specific populations, e.g., hepatic impairment or renal impairment, and in pregnancy and breastfeeding.			