

Threadworms

Noketui

Threadworms (also known as pinworms, or just worms) are a common small white worm that can live in your gut (bowel). At night, the female worm crawls out to lay eggs in the skin around your bottom (anus).

Anyone can be infected by threadworms, but they're most common in tamariki (children) of school age.

Threadworms are spread by swallowing the eggs. This happens if you scratch, causing the eggs to get under your fingernails. They can then get onto your clothes, bedding, toys or furniture. You can infect yourself by putting your hand in your mouth. Other people can get the eggs on their hands from things you've touched.

Threadworms only live in people, so you can't get them from pets or other animals. They're mostly spread between whānau (family) members.



Symptoms of threadworms

Often there are no symptoms, but threadworms can cause intense itching around the bottom, where the worms lay their eggs. This especially happens at night. You might notice your tamaiti (child) scratching their bottom a lot, or they might tell you it's itchy. You might see white threads in their poo or around their bottom.

Treating threadworms

You can treat worms with a medicine called [mebendazole](#), which you can get from your [GP](#) or directly from your [pharmacist](#). It's sensible to treat the whole household to prevent threadworms spreading or coming back. You should take the treatment again after two weeks to prevent reinfection, as the eggs of threadworms can last outside the body.

Good hygiene is as important as the medicine to get rid of eggs and stop you getting infected again. Wash all your sleepwear, bedding and towels. Vacuum carpets and wipe down surfaces in your house, especially your bathroom.

Getting help with threadworms

You should see your GP if the symptoms continue after treatment with mebendazole.

Also check with your doctor if you're pregnant, or have children aged under two.

Reducing the spread of threadworms

To reduce the risk of spreading threadworms, practise good [hand hygiene](#). This is especially important after going to the toilet, and before handling and eating food.

Wash underwear, bedclothes and bed linen regularly.



HealthInfo recommends the following pages

- [Patient.info – Threadworms](#)

This UK site has more detailed information about threadworms.

Written by HealthInfo [clinical advisers](#). Last reviewed May 2022.

 [Sources](#)

Te Whatu Ora

Health New Zealand

Waitaha Canterbury