

Let's learn a little about WORMS!!!

- Threadworm (also known as pinworm) is the most common human worm infestation that occurs in Australia. It can infest even the "cleanest" people, affecting 1 in 2 kids and 1 in 3 adults! Despite its unsavoury reputation, threadworms are relatively harmless. When examined closely, these worms look like a short piece of white thread, (thus explaining their name), and measure between 2 and 13 millimetres in length.
- These worms live in our gastrointestinal tract and actually *need* humans in order to reproduce and survive.
- People can catch other types of worm infections, such as roundworm, hookworm, whipworm and tapeworm; however, it is important to note these conditions are not common in Australia. If you suspect you are suffering from a condition other than threadworm, it is important to consult your pharmacist for further information. The pharmacist may even need to refer you to your GP for prescription of an alternative medication for these conditions.

How do I find out if I have worms?

- Separate the patient's buttocks and look carefully around the anus (and vagina in girls) using a torch at night. The female worms may then be seen moving around the anus or vagina.
- The "sticky tape test" is another effective method of diagnosis. The patient may obtain a kit containing sticky transparent tape and a glass slide from their GP. The tape is applied to the area just outside of the anus and between the buttocks. After sticking the tape to the skin, it is then removed and put onto the glass slide for examination. Please note the best time to conduct this test is first thing in the morning, before any bowel movements or washing of the area.
- A stool sample may be used to identify a worm infection, but this type of test may only be positive in 5% of all cases!

How did I catch worms? Did I get it from my dog?

The most important point you need to take from this section is that human beings cannot and do not catch threadworms from animals. There are other more serious types of worm infections that humans may contract from animals; however, if you suspect this has happened, please speak with the pharmacist.

There are 2 main ways a person may contract threadworms:

- **Directly:** through human contact with another infected person.
- **Indirectly:** through contact with surfaces that the infected person has been in contact with; e.g. Doorhandles, taps, linen, pencils etc

Please refer to the diagram right for explanation of the transmission and lifecycle of threadworms:



What are some of the most common symptoms of threadworm?

- Itchy bottom (and sometimes vagina), especially at night
- Inflammation and redness of the anus or vagina
- Decreased appetite
- Irritability and sleep disturbance
- Feeling mildly unwell

Please note not all patients suffering with threadworms will experience these "tell-tale" symptoms—thus, showing the importance of regular screening for the condition! (as described above left)

How can I get rid of threadworm??

There are several methods of treatment available over the counter for threadworm infestation. In order to recommend the best available product for a person with this condition, your pharmacist will need to know their age, their weight and if a female patient is pregnant or breastfeeding. There are 2 over-the-counter drugs used for treatment of threadworm and these include Mebendazole and Pyrantel. Further information on these drugs is listed in the table below:

Drug Name	Types of Worms Treated	Brand Examples	Use in Pregnancy	Use in Breastfeeding	Use in Children	Possible Adverse Effects
Pyrantel	Threadworm, Roundworm, Hookworm	Combantrin Chocolate squares, Anthel	Safe	Safe	May use	Well tolerated – common adverse effects include possible nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal cramps, headache
Mebendazole	Threadworm, Roundworm, Hookworm, Whipworm	Combantrin-1, Vermox, Chemists' Own De Worm	Avoid in first trimester	May use	May use if >6 months old	Well tolerated – <u>adverse effects are infrequent/rare as it is poorly absorbed into the body</u>

N.B. We are only discussing treatment of threadworm in this leaflet. If you suspect you require treatment for another type of worm infestation, consult your pharmacist.

Threadworm Treatment Options

Worm Treatment Tablets 6

Active ingredient: Mebendazole 100mg

Directions for use:

- A single dose of 100mg is recommended for children over 10kg and adults.
- Infants over 6 months and up to 10kg may be given half this dose (50mg); however, consultation with your pharmacist would be a must in this case.
- **Repeat with a second dose in 2 weeks** to treat any eggs/worms that may have survived the first treatment.

Important points to remember:

- Caution in pregnancy—avoid in first trimester.
- Tablets are pleasant tasting and chewable for ease of administration in children.



Combantrin Chocolate Squares 24

Active ingredient: Pyrantel 100mg

Directions for use:

- 10mg/kg bodyweight as a single dose (maximum 1g). The table below shows dosing schedule given on box:
- **Repeat with a second dose in 2 weeks** to treat any eggs/worms that may have survived the first treatment.

Important points to remember:

- Preferred treatment in pregnancy—safe to use in all trimesters



Approx. Age*	Weight Range	No. of Squares
Below 1 year	Consult your doctor	
1-5 years	10-25kg	1-2
6-10 years	26-45kg	3-4
11-13 years	46-56kg	5
14-18 years	57-70kg	6
Adults	Over 70kg	7

*Approx. Age is only a guide

Lifestyle Advice

Threadworms are transmitted by person-to-person contact. Thus, we can prevent transmission by obeying some simple hygiene practices. We will discuss these below, along with some other advice from our LiveLife pharmacists.

☀ **Do I just treat myself, or everyone in the family?**

It is advisable to treat all members of your household at the same time, and to treat EVERYONE in the household, whether they have symptoms or not.

☀ **Do I need to worm my family each time I worm our pets?**

No. Remember that threadworm can only be passed from human-to-human. There are other more rare worm infestations that may be transferred from your dog/cat to humans; however, if you suspect a patient is suffering from one of these conditions, please refer to your pharmacist.

☀ **What things can I do to prevent threadworm?**

- Keep fingernails short and clean
- Discourage scratching of the bottom and nail biting.
- Encourage all family members to wash hands and nails thoroughly after going to the toilet, changing nappies, and before/after preparing food.
- Daily showers are important, with particular attention to washing around the anus area.
- Vacuum often to pick up any ova (eggs) and regularly disinfect the toilet seat.
- Do not share towels and wash linen/towels regularly.
- Put firm fitting underpants on children when going to bed to deter from scratching.
- Do not worm your child every 6 months to "keep them away." Worming treatments are not a prevention and will only treat a current infection. They will also be ineffective if not followed up with the second treatment a fortnight after the first, as you need to kill any eggs that have hatched!

☀ **What if the treatment didn't work?**

Ensure you have followed all of the directions and lifestyle advice given by your pharmacist/pharmacy assistant. Also ensure you have followed up the first treatment with a second treatment approximately 2 weeks after the first. Important to buy enough for both treatments! Check the symptoms at your LiveLife pharmacy and if it doesn't sound like a typical threadworm infection, they will refer you onto the pharmacist.

☀ **Can I treat threadworm if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?**

- In pregnancy, preparations with Pyrantel (e.g. Combantrin chocolate squares) are safe to use. Avoid preparations with Mebendazole in the first trimester.
- In lactation, pyrantel is again the preferred safe ingredient to use; however, mebendazole may be used if pyrantel is not available.

☀ **Once I have taken my threadworm medication, will this protect me against infection in the future?**

No. All threadworm medications are to treat the current infection only. Therefore, repeat infestation is common and can occur even if a patient has just recently been treated for the condition. This is why the lifestyle points mentioned previously are so important. Prevention is always better than a cure!

☀ **When should I speak with the pharmacist?**

- Patient is pregnant/breastfeeding or under 6 months of age
- Previous treatment failure
- Patient is experiencing abnormal symptoms such as blood in the faeces, nausea/vomiting, abdominal pain
- There is broken skin in the anal region

Remember the pharmacist is always there to help you with anything you need!

"Optimal Care" products from your LiveLife Pharmacy

- **Protective barrier cream to deter scratching**
- **Nail scissors to cut children's nails to stop them scratching and the eggs getting underneath**
- **Nail brush to scrub the fingernails to remove eggs**
- **Antibacterial hand sanitiser**
- **Self care fact card from the pharmacist**
- **Medication to treat other family members; i.e. Everyone in the household!**

