

CORNWALL CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL HEALTH OFFICE

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PINWORMS:

- Pinworms are extremely common. Although anyone can catch pinworms, they are most common in children aged 5 – 14 years. Pinworms live in your intestines and survive by eating some of the nutrients in your food. The life cycle of the pinworm—egg, larva (immature stage), and mature worm—takes place inside the human body and requires from three to six weeks to complete.
- The most common symptom of pinworms is an itchy rectal area. Symptoms are worse at night when the worms are most active and crawl out of the anus to deposit their eggs. Although pinworm infections can be annoying, they do not cause any serious health problems and are usually not dangerous.
- Pinworms are big enough to be seen with the naked eye. They are yellow-white and look like a fine piece of thread. They are usually less than $\frac{1}{2}$ "long. Pinworms are most active at night. The best time to see them on the anus is a few hours after bedtime, by shining a flashlight on the child's bare bottom. They can also sometimes be seen on the outside of a child's stool.
- Pinworms are extremely easy to catch from someone who is infected. The infection is spread by tiny eggs deposited around the anus by the worms. When someone with pinworms scratches this area, eggs lodge under the fingernails and can be spread to anything he or she touches. Eggs are also spread by dust, clothing, bedding or toys.
- If you suspect that you or your child might have pinworms, please contact your doctor. Students must be excluded from school for 24 hours after the medication is given (usually a single dose). Your doctor may have you repeat it in one to two weeks.
- Prevention includes washing hands after using the toilet, and before and after eating. Avoid biting of fingernails and keep them short and clean. Thoroughly launder all bedding, clothing and toys to destroy any lingering eggs. **Launder all bedding every 3 – 7 days for three weeks and wash underwear and pajamas daily for two weeks.**