Pinworm infection begins when a person unknowingly swallows tiny (nearly invisible) pinworm eggs.

The eggs mature inside a person’s intestine. In about a month, the eggs hatch and become adult parasitic worms that move through the intestine. With new eggs to lay, the female pinworms crawl out of the person’s bottom, usually at night. The female pinworms lay thousands of tiny, sticky eggs just outside the anal area.

The sticky eggs and the movement of the worms can cause intense itching of the anal area.

When an infected person scratches his or her bottom, the sticky eggs cling to the fingers. The infected person unknowingly spreads eggs to almost everything he or she touches.

Nearly invisible, pinworm eggs can live for 3 weeks on surfaces such as doorknobs, bedding, towels, furniture, toys, and other objects.

As people unknowingly touch objects with pinworm eggs on them, the eggs stick to their fingers.

When a person touches his or her mouth, he or she unknowingly swallows the tiny pinworm eggs. Once the eggs are swallowed, that person becomes infected.

This is how pinworm infection is spread. If it is not treated, pinworm infection can infect more people and repeatedly reinfect the same person.
HOW PINWORM INFECTS—AND REINFECTS

1. CONTACT WITH CONTAGIOUS PINWORM EGGS
The infected person scratches and removes sticky eggs with his or her fingers.

2. NeARLY INVISIBLE EGGS ARE SWALLOWED

3. PINWORMS HATCH IN THE SMALL INTESTINE
Approximately 1 month

4. ADULT PINWORMS ATTACH TO THE LINING OF THE INTESTINE

5. PREGNANT PINWORMS MOVE THROUGH THE COLON TO THE RECTUM

6. PINWORMS EXIT THE RECTUM AT NIGHT AND LAY THOUSANDS OF EGGS IN THE ANAL AREA, CAUSING INTENSE ITCHING AND SLEEP DISTURBANCE

7. The person gets reinfected by touching hands to mouth and contaminates the house with pinworm eggs.

8. ASK YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT TREATMENT OPTIONS
Your doctor or your child’s doctor may want to treat everyone in your household, as they may be infected too.

Ask your doctor about treatment options for pinworm.