TRICHINOSIS FACTSHEET

What is Trichinosis?
Trichinellosis, also called trichinosis, is caused by eating raw or undercooked meat of animals infected with the larvae of a species of worm called *Trichinella*. Infection occurs commonly in certain wild carnivorous (meat-eating) animals such as bear or cougar, or omnivorous (meat and plant-eating) animals such as domestic pigs or wild boar.

Who can get Trichinosis?
Anyone who eats raw or undercooked meats, particularly bear, pork, wild feline (such as a cougar), fox, dog, wolf, horse, seal, or walrus.

What are the symptoms of Trichinosis?
The signs, symptoms, severity and duration of trichinellosis vary. Nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, fatigue, fever, and abdominal discomfort are often the first symptoms of trichinellosis. Headaches, fevers, chills, cough, swelling of the face and eyes, aching joints and muscle pains, itchy skin, diarrhea, or constipation may follow the first symptoms. If the infection is heavy, patients may experience difficulty coordinating movements, and have heart and breathing problems. In severe cases, death can occur.

How soon do symptoms appear?
Abdominal symptoms can occur 1 to 2 days after infection. Further symptoms usually start 2 to 8 weeks after eating contaminated meat. Symptoms may range from very mild to severe and relate to the number of infectious worms consumed in the meat.

How does Trichinosis spread?
Infection can only occur by eating raw or undercooked meat containing *Trichinella* worms.

How is Trichinosis diagnosed?
A blood test or muscle biopsy can show if you have trichinellosis.

How is Trichinosis treated?
Several safe and effective prescription drugs are available to treat trichinellosis. Treatment should begin as soon as possible and the decision to treat is based upon symptoms, exposure to raw or undercooked meat, and laboratory test results.

How can a person protect themselves against Trichinosis?

- The best way to prevent trichinellosis is to cook meat to safe temperatures. A food thermometer should be used to measure the internal temperature of cooked meat. Do not sample meat until it is cooked.
- Curing (salting), drying, smoking, or microwaving meat alone does not consistently kill infective worms; homemade jerky and sausage were the cause of many cases of trichinellosis reported to CDC in recent years.
- Freeze pork less than 6 inches thick for 20 days at 5°F (-15°C) to kill any worms.
- Freezing wild game meats, unlike freezing pork products, may not effectively kill all worms because some worm species that infect wild game animals are freeze-resistant.
- Clean meat grinders thoroughly after each use.

Where can I get more information?
Information about shigellosis and other related health topics can be found at www.cdc.gov. The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please visit https://dchealth.dc.gov or call (202) 442-9021

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