

Trichinosis

Trichinellosis

FACTSHEET

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What is Trichinosis?

Trichinosis is a disease caused by a microscopic parasite (worm). The parasite infects animals and eating infected undercooked or raw meat causes disease.

Who gets Trichinosis?

Anyone who eats undercooked or raw meat of infected animals can develop trichinosis. Pork products are implicated more often than other meats.

What are the symptoms of Trichinosis?

The first symptoms of trichinosis may include nausea, vomiting, fatigue, fever, and abdominal pain. Headaches, fevers, chills, cough, eye swelling, aching joints, and muscle pains, itchy skin, diarrhea, or constipation follow the first symptoms. In people heavily infected, difficulty coordinating movements, and heart and breathing problems can occur. Severe cases can result in death.

How is Trichinosis spread?

Trichinosis is spread by eating infected undercooked or raw meat.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Abdominal symptoms can occur one to two days after infection. Further symptoms usually start two to eight 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.

Is a person with Trichinosis contagious?

No, the disease is not spread from person-to-person.

How is Trichinosis treated?

Several safe and effective prescription drugs are available to treat trichinosis. Treatment should start as soon as possible.

Should a person with Trichinosis be excluded from work or school?

It is not necessary to exclude a person with trichinosis from work or school.

Can Trichinosis be prevented?

Trichinosis can be prevented by:

- Cooking meat products until the juices run clear or to an internal temperature of 170 degrees
- Freeze pork less than six inches thick for 20 days at 5 degrees to kill any worms
- Cook wild game thoroughly. Freezing wild game meats, unlike freezing pork products, even for long periods of time, may not effectively kill all worms
- Cook all meat fed to pigs or other wild animals
- Do not allow hogs to eat uncooked carcasses of other animals, including rats, which may be infected with trichinosis
- Clean meat grinders thoroughly if you prepare your own ground meats
- Curing (salting), drying, smoking, or microwaving does not consistently kill infective worms.

Want more information?

Additional information about trichinosis and other related health care topics can be found at the website www.cdc.gov. The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please call 202-442-5842.

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