

TRICHINOSIS (Trichinellosis)

What is Trichinosis?

Trichinosis is a parasitic infection caused by eating food contaminated with the larvae (a developing phase) of a worm called *Trichinella*. Persons with trichinosis usually have nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, fever and abdominal discomfort. Headache, fever, chills, cough, eye swelling, aching joints and muscle pain, itchy skin, diarrhea, or constipation 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.

Who gets trichinosis?

Anyone can get trichinosis if they eat raw or undercooked pork and wild game products infected with *Trichinella*. Infection occurs worldwide, but is most common in areas where raw or undercooked pork, such as ham or sausage, is eaten.

How is trichinosis spread?

You get trichinosis by eating food contaminated with *Trichinella*. The infection cannot be spread from one person to another.

How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

Abdominal symptoms can occur 1-2 days after infection. Further symptoms usually start 2-8 weeks later. Symptoms may range from very mild to severe depending on the number of infectious worms consumed.

How is trichinosis diagnosed?

Trichinosis is diagnosed by a blood test or muscle biopsy.

What is the treatment for trichinosis?

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

How can trichinosis be prevented?

1. Cook meat products until the juices run clear or to an internal temperature of 170° F.
2. Freeze pork products less than 6 inches thick for 20 days at 5° F to kill any worms.

3. Cook wild game meat thoroughly. Freezing wild game meats, unlike freezing pork products, even for long periods of time, may not effectively kill all worms.
4. Cook all meat or garbage that is fed to pigs or other livestock.
5. Do not allow hogs to eat uncooked carcasses of other animals, including rats, which may be infected with trichinosis.
6. Clean meat grinders thoroughly if you prepare your own ground meats.
7. Curing (salting), drying, smoking, or microwaving meat does not consistently kill infective worms.

Where can I get more information?

- Your personal doctor.
- Your local health department listed in your telephone directory.
- The Utah Department of Health, Bureau of Epidemiology (801) 538-6191.

UTAH DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
BUREAU OF EPIDEMIOLOGY
August 2001

This fact sheet was based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Trichinosis sheet (last updated 2/2/98).