

Trichinosis

What is Trichinosis?

Trichinosis is a disease caused by a microscopic parasite that is found in the muscle tissues of animals.

Who gets Trichinosis?

People who eat undercooked meat of animals infected by the parasite can develop trichinosis. Animals such as pigs, dogs, cats, rats and many wild animals (including fox, wolf and polar bear) may carry the parasite but pork products are the source more often than other meats. Person-to-person spread does not occur.

What are the symptoms of Trichinosis?

Symptoms begin 5 to 45 days, but usually 10 to 14 days after eating contaminated meat. The symptoms usually start with fever, muscle soreness, pain and swelling around the eyes. Thirst, heavy sweating, chills, weakness and tiredness may develop. Chest pain may be experienced since the parasite may become embedded in the diaphragm (the thin muscle separating the lungs from the abdominal organs). If it is not treated, it can be fatal.

What is the treatment for Trichinosis?

A drug called mebendazole is used in treatment.

What can be done to prevent the spread of Trichinosis?

The best prevention is to make sure that pork products are properly cooked. The recommended internal temperature of pork is at least 71°C (160°F). Check the temperature by using a probe thermometer and make sure the temperature stays the same for at least 15 seconds. Storing infected meat in a freezer with a temperature no higher than -25°C (0°F) for 10 days will also destroy the parasite.

This fact sheet provides basic information only. It must not take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always talk to a health care professional about any health concerns.

**For further information contact the Infectious Disease Program at 625-8318
or toll free 1-888-294-6630, ext. 8318.**

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