

Trichinosis

Fact Sheet



Maine Center for Disease
Control and Prevention
An Office of the
Department of Health and Human Services

What is trichinosis?

Trichinosis (trick-i-no-sis), also called trichinellosis (trick-i-nell-o-sis), is caused by eating raw or undercooked meat of animals infected with a species of worm called *Trichinella*.

What are the signs and symptoms of trichinosis?

The first symptoms are nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, fatigue, fever, and abdominal discomfort. Other symptoms include headaches, fevers, chills, cough, eye swelling, aching joints, muscle pains, itchy skin, diarrhea, or constipation. Patients may have heart and breathing problems, or have trouble moving their body. For people with mild or moderate illness, most symptoms go away within a few months. Fatigue, weakness, and diarrhea may last for months. In severe cases, death can occur.

How soon after infection will symptoms appear?

Abdominal symptoms can occur 1-2 days after eating contaminated meat, otherwise, symptoms usually start 2-8 weeks after infection. Mild cases of trichinosis are wrongly diagnosed as the flu or other common illnesses.

Am I at risk for trichinosis?

If you eat raw or undercooked meats, particularly bear, pork, wild feline (such as a cougar), fox, dog, wolf, horse, seal, or walrus, you are at risk for trichinosis.

Can I spread trichinosis to others?

No. Infection can only occur by eating raw or undercooked meat containing *Trichinella*.

What should I do if I think I have trichinosis?

Your health care provider can order tests and treat symptoms of this illness. If you have eaten raw or undercooked meat, you should tell your health care provider.

How is trichinosis infection diagnosed?

A blood test or muscle biopsy can show if you have this illness.

How is trichinosis infection treated?

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

How can I prevent trichinosis?

- Cook meat and meat products to safe temperatures using a meat thermometer. Do not taste the meat until it is fully cooked.
 - For whole cuts of meat (excluding poultry and wild game), cook to at least 145°F (63°C) and allow the meat to rest for 3 minutes before carving or consuming
 - For ground meat (excluding poultry and wild game), cook to at least 160°F (71°C)
 - For all poultry (whole cuts and ground), cook to at least 165°F (74°C) and allow the whole poultry to rest for 3 minutes before carving or consuming
- Cook wild game meat thoroughly.
 - For wild game (whole cuts and ground), cook to at least 160°F (71°C)
- Curing (salting), drying, smoking, or microwaving meat does not consistently kill infective worms.
- 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, 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
- Clean meat grinders thoroughly if you prepare your own ground meats.

Where can I get more information?

For more information contact your healthcare provider or local health center. You can also contact the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention by calling 1-800-821-5821 or online at www.mainepublichealth.gov. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website - <http://www.cdc.gov> - is another excellent source of health information.