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## Threadworms Treatment in Breastfeeding Mothers

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Threadworms are small, white, thread-like worms between 2 and 13 mm long. Infection in children is common and toddlers may infect their mothers who may be breastfeeding. Threadworms live for about 6 weeks in the gut, and then die. The female worms lay tiny eggs around the anus and these cause intense itching. Transfer of the ova back into the mouth perpetuates the infection. Careful washing of hands and scrubbing beneath the nails, which should ideally be kept short, is essential. Tight fitting underwear for children prevents scratching in the sleep. Threadworm eggs can also survive for up to two weeks outside the body and so can be moved from sheets into the general household environment. Infection is not serious but is unacceptable to most families. If left untreated, but with strict hygiene measure to ensure no further eggs are swallowed, the worms will die out in 6 weeks. For further information see [www.patient.co.uk/showdoc/23068841/](http://www.patient.co.uk/showdoc/23068841/)

Medication to treat threadworm infections is generally used in addition to hygiene measures. Mebendazole (*Vermox*®, *Ovex*®, *Pripsen tablets*®). Adults and children over the age of two 100mg (one tablet) with a second dose after 2 weeks if re-infection is suspected. It may be given to children under the age of 2 years but is not licensed for such use. Appendix 5 of the BNF (British National Formulary) states that the amount excreted into breastmilk is too small to be harmful although the manufacturer advises avoidance under the limitations of licensing.

For explanation see

<http://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/patient-information-leaflets.html>

Mebendazole is poorly absorbed from the gastro intestinal tract. It undergoes extensive first pass metabolism and is highly protein bound, so only low levels are likely to reach breastmilk. Side effects are generally gastro-intestinal with tummy cramps and diarrhoea reported. Preparations are not licensed during lactation but as it is virtually unabsorbed from the gut it is unlikely to cause adverse effects in the baby or to affect breastmilk supply.

**To find your nearest Breastfeeding Supporter call the Supporterline 0300 100 0210**

Calls to 0300 numbers cost no more than calls to UK numbers starting 01 and 02 and will be part of any inclusive minutes that apply to your provider and call package

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**References**

- Children's BNF
- BNF
- LactMed website
- Martindale the Extra Pharmacopeia