Indiana State Department of Health
Epidemiology Resource Center

Quick Facts

About…Trichinosis

What is trichinosis?

Trichinosis is a disease caused by a worm called Trichinella, which lives in animals including pigs, bear, dogs, cats, horses, foxes, wolves, walrus, seals and rats. It is rare for humans to have trichinosis in the United States.

What are the symptoms of trichinosis?

- Diarrhea
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Stomach cramps
- Fever
- Muscle pain
- Eye swelling
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Chills

How severe the symptoms are depends on how many worms were eaten in the meat. Most people have no symptoms or very mild symptoms. Symptoms usually begin 1 to 2 weeks after exposure. Diarrhea, nausea, vomiting and stomach cramps appear first, followed by muscle pain, eye swelling, fatigue, headache and chills. With severe infection, some people may have a hard time moving around or breathing. Death can occur if severe cases are not treated.

How is trichinosis spread?

You can get trichinosis by eating raw or undercooked meats like pork products and wild game, such as bear, seal, or walrus.

Trichinosis is NOT spread from person to person.

Who is at risk for getting Trichinosis?

People who eat raw or undercooked meats from bear, pork, wild cats (such as a cougar), fox, dog, wolf, horse, seal, or walrus, are at risk for trichinosis.

How do I know if I have Trichinosis?

You cannot tell without seeing your doctor. Your doctor may collect a blood sample or sample of muscle tissue (biopsy).

How is Trichinosis treated?

Your doctor can prescribe medicines to treat the infection.

How is Trichinosis prevented?

- Always wash your hands after handling raw meat.
- Do not eat raw or undercooked pork or wild game meats.
- Use separate cutting boards for meat and other foods.
- Carefully clean all grinders, cutting boards, work surfaces, and utensils with soap and hot water after preparing raw meat.
- Cook meat products until juices run clear or reach a temperature of 170° F.
- Curing, drying, smoking or microwaving does not always kill the worms.
- Cook all meat fed to pigs or other animals.
- Do not allow pigs to eat uncooked wild animals, including rats.

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information, please refer to: http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/trichinellosis/index.html

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