



Trichinosis

Definition:

Trichinellosis, also called trichinosis, is a disease that people can get by eating raw or undercooked meat from animals infected with the microscopic parasite *Trichinella*.

Signs and symptoms:

Signs and symptoms may range from very mild to severe. Early symptoms of trichinosis include nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, fatigue, fever, and abdominal pain. Later symptoms (2 to 8 weeks after ingestion) include headache, fevers, chills, cough, swelling of the face and eyes, aching joints and muscle pains, itchy skin, diarrhea, or constipation. Severe symptoms include difficulty coordinating movements, and heart and breathing problems.

Transmission:

People acquire trichinosis by consuming raw or undercooked meat infected with the *Trichinella* parasite, particularly wild game meat or pork. Infection is not transmitted directly from person to person.

Diagnosis:

Trichinosis is diagnosed by clinical symptoms and laboratory tests. Laboratory tests include testing of blood for the presence of *Trichinella* parasites. In some cases, a muscle biopsy may be performed.

Role of the School Nurse:

Prevention

- Provide education to students and staff regarding good hand washing with soap and water
- Promote proper hand washing after using the toilet, changing diapers or assisting children with the toilet or preparing/touching food
- Provide education on good food safety practices, including fully cooking meat

Treatment Recommendations

- If symptoms are noted, the child should be referred to their primary care provider for treatment
- Trichinosis is treated with anti-parasitic medication.

Exclusions

- Students should be excluded from school while symptomatic with diarrhea.

Reporting Requirements

- Trichinosis is a reportable disease – report to Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821

Resources:

- Maine CDC website (including fact sheet) www.maine.gov/dhhs/trichinosis
- DOE Child Nutrition Services <https://www.maine.gov/doe/schools/nutrition>
- Federal CDC website <https://www.cdc.gov/trichinellosis/about/index.html>