

# IDRS Infectious Disease Reporting System

Disease Reporting 24 Hours a Day

Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health

## TRICHINOSIS

Trichinosis, also called trichinellosis, is caused by a worm called *Trichinella Spiralis*. Once very common, this disease is now relatively rare.

### Symptoms

Many infections do not have symptoms. People who do have symptoms usually have eaten a large number of *Trichinella* larvae. The symptoms occur in several phases:

- First phase (1-2 days after infection)
  - Lack of appetite
  - Nausea and vomiting
  - Abdominal pain
  - Diarrhea
- Second phase (7-11 days after infection)
  - Eyelid swelling
  - Muscle pain
  - Headache
  - Fever, sweating, and chills
  - Weakness
- Third phase (10-30 days after infection)
  - Sore muscles, which can last for several months.

### Transmission

- Trichinosis is acquired by eating raw or undercooked meat of animals infected with trichinella. Pigs are the most common source of infection in humans, but wild animals such as cougar, fox, dog, wolf, horse, seal, or walrus, and particularly bear may also carry the worm.
- The worm forms cysts that live in an animal's muscles until they are eaten by another animal or human. Then, the worms mature and breed in the intestines. Eventually, the worms travel to the muscles, where they curl into a ball and encyst (become enclosed in a capsule).
- Trichinosis is not contagious. Infection only occurs by eating contaminated meat.

### Treatment

- Diagnosis of trichinosis is based upon symptoms, exposure to raw or undercooked meat, and laboratory test results. A health care provider may order a blood test or take a muscle sample to test for the worm.
- Several safe and effective medicines available and can be prescribed by a health care provider.

### Prevention

- Always cook all pork products and wild game meat to a sufficient temperature. Freezing may not kill all worms in infected meat. Cook meat until juices run clear or to a temperature of 170°F in the center.
- Pig farmers should prevent pigs from eating uncooked carcasses of other animals, like rats.
- Clean meat grinders thoroughly if you prepare your own ground meats.
- Curing (salting), drying, smoking, or microwaving meat may not kill the worms.

**All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.**



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