What are hookworms and how do they affect you? If this question has been bothering you and you are one of the millions who have been affected by this niggling hookworm infection, here is a simple answer to your question-They are parasitic in nature, and can affect your lungs and small intestines. How do you contract the infection though? Humans get infected with hookworms through roundworm eggs and larvae found in dirt contaminated by feces.

Going by the reports provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), hookworm infection affects about 576 to 740 million people around the world. It basically affects people from underdeveloped and developing countries who maintain poor sanitation habits.

What Causes Hookworm Infections?

Parasitic roundworms called hookworms cause this kind of infection. The Necator American hookworm is the chief cause of this kind of infection. The other kind of hookworm which causes the infection is Ancylostoma duodenal. There are two other types of hookworms, but only animals get affected by them.

The eggs of these worms are laid on the ground; they are transferred to the ground with the help of human feces. They then hatch into larvae which stay in the soil, after which they look for a chance to break into the skin of humans.
Symptoms of Hook Worm

If you’re a healthy person and eat foods containing iron, you might not show any symptoms. But if the hookworm symptoms begin to show up, they start with a small rash which looks like an allergic reaction when the larvae enter the body. This is generally followed by intermittent bouts of diarrhea as the hookworms proliferate your intestine. There are some other symptoms as well which can cause you much distress such as:

- Abdominal pain
- Cramps in Intestines
- Nausea
- Fever
- Blood in your feces
- Appetite loss
- Itchy rash
- Colic or cramps in toddlers.

How does the infection spread?

You have a possibility of getting affected by the parasites by accidentally getting in touch with the soil infested by ringworm larvae. The larvae enter your skin, travel through your bloodstream, and finally enter your intestines surreptitiously without you having any inkling of it. They also make a beeline for your windpipe and are transported to your small intestine when you gulp down something. When they are fully grown, they stay in your intestine for a year or so then leave your body through excretion.

Usually, people get affected when they live in warm and moist climate zones. Generally, people who practice poor hygiene and sanitation practices get affected by this kind of infection, which are also regarded as the chief causes of hookworm.

Can Pets Affect you as well?

Hookworm infections can be transferred to you if your pets are affected; chances are you might also get affected by your pet’s infection. If your pet has been infected, you get affected indirectly. You might not get it by mere contact, but you might get it if you walk on the ground bare feet, especially where your pets have left behind stools, which have been infected by eggs and larvae of the hookworm.
To stop yourself from getting affected, ensure that your pets are vaccinated and dewormed by your veterinarian. Additionally, do not walk barefoot on dirty soil. This is especially pertinent when you might come in contact with animal feces from pets, and are not too conversant with the health condition of pets seen in a public place like parks.

**Severity of Parasitic Infections**

If you have been infected by hookworms since a long time, you could become anemic. A dip in red blood cells is one of the chief characteristics of anemia. Anemia is a result of hookworms feeding on your blood. You’re more likely to get severe anemia if you also don’t have an appetite, have malaria or are pregnant. Other side-effects that can develop from these infections are severe nutritional deficiencies and a condition known as ascites. Ascites is a condition where there is the development of fluids in the abdomen. Children who have a tendency to have frequent hookworm infections can experience stunted physical and mental growth as they lose a lot of iron and protein.

**Home Remedies to treat Hookworms**

While it is difficult to know when you get infected, you can get considerable relief from the symptoms by following certain home remedies which are very effective hookworm treatment, such as:
- **Pomegranates**: Grind the fruit tree bark or the peel of the pomegranate into a fine powder. It contains a chemical called punitive, which is poison to the intestinal worms. Take 3 to 5 grams of this powder with water and sugar once or two times in a day.

- Sweet basil is an age-old and effective cure for intestinal worms. Make a concoction of the leaves or the powder of seeds to eliminate hookworms in the intestine.

- **Papaya**: An enzyme called papain is found in papaya. It is a potent mix to banish hookworms from the intestines. Extract one teaspoon juice from unripe papaya. Mix it with an equal quantity of water and honey. Drink the juice for two days. One hour after consuming the juice, drink one teaspoon of castor oil blended in one glass of milk. It acts as a purgative and the ringworms are flushed out along with the feces.

- **Unripe beetle nut**: Prepare a paste from the unripe beetle nut. Mix one to two grams of paste with one teaspoon of lemon juice. Drink for two days consecutively.

- **Drumstick seeds**: These are found to contain anthelminthic properties. Powder the drumstick seeds and take two grams of it with water two times in a day for three days.

- **Wormwood**: The herb wormwood is an extremely effective way of getting rid of hookworms. This remedy has been used from time immemorial to eliminate ringworms from the intestines.

- **Garlic**: The innocuous looking herb is actually a Godsend, as garlic has loads of benefits. Fresh Garlic cloves act as antiviral, antifungal, and antibacterial agents, and are often used by alternative medicine practitioners to treat worms or other parasitic disorders. Allicin, the active potent compound in Garlic, is used to cure giardia, pinworms, roundworms, tapeworms, and hookworms.
- **Fruit of ebony**: Traditional Thai medicine has endorsed the fruit of the Ebony (Diospyros mollis) tree for the effective treatment of hookworm infections. The fruit of the tree is pounded and blended with coconut milk and the patient is asked to have the concoction on an empty stomach. In fact, this potent concoction has been said to be more effective than the allopathic medication Hexylresorcinol in the treatment of hookworm infection.

- **Pumpkin Seeds**: Eat pumpkin seeds. They are particularly effective in killing roundworms and tapeworms. Lightly pan or roast in an oven to remove any possible contaminants that are found on them. Pumpkin seeds are more effective in eliminating parasites if eaten on an empty stomach.

- **Carrots**: Carrots contain an essential oil that destroys roundworms and pinworms. To kill worms, grated carrots work best. Be sure to eat them on an empty stomach several times throughout the day.

Nut seeds contain alkaloids, which function as de-worming agents. Pomegranate rind and root contain alkaloids and tannins, which are very effective in treating all kinds of worms, especially roundworms and tapeworms. Here are some examples of herbal recipes to cope with hookworms in people.
Recipe 1:
This is a great hookworm medicine to treat all kinds of worms.

Mix 15 grams of dried nut in the mashed beans, 60 grams of dried pumpkin seeds crushed and 15 grams of dried pomegranate skin. All material is boiled with 600 cc of water boil in low heat until the remaining 200 cc, filtered after the cold water is taken.

Recipe 2:
This is a great natural remedy to treat few stubborn parasites.
Roast the wud ani beans roasted until cooked, then eaten with a chewed ½ hour before eating. [What does this sentence mean?] Small children should consume 3-15 seeds a day, adults should consume 15-30 seeds a day, divided into 3 meals. Do it for 15 consecutive days (one Looking for a). [Where’s the rest of the sentence?] This is a great remedy for (For pinworm, hookworm, roundworm, and whipworm). [Why the brackets?]
Recipe 3:

This is another potent recipe to combat hookworms. Mix dribbles 20 grams and 15 grams of fresh blackIntersection and 2 cloves fresh garlic, washed and didihaluskan or blended by adding 100 cc of warm water, filtered, taken in the morning half an hour before meals. [Rewrite, very unclear]

Preventive Actions for Hookwarm

We all have heard about the adage, prevention is better than cure. In this case, too we must take ample precautions to not get infested with these parasites. We must also take precautions for the people who are more susceptible to the disease like:

- Young children
- Women of childbearing age
- Pregnant women
- Lactating Women
- Adults who work in conditions that put them at risk for heavy infections.

It is necessary that we take extra precautions to avoid getting infected by these parasitic creatures. The following measures can act as shields and protect you from getting infected.

- Wash your hands whenever you can. If you cannot wash your hands, try to avail a hand sanitizer. Try and keep your hands scrupulously clean at all times, and clean them after you handle things on your desk, in your bag, and other items from outside. Try to keep your hands away from your eyes, nose, and mouth if you know that they are dirty.
- Eat only food you are sure of and stay away from contaminated food. Food that is not prepared in a hygienic manner can be the breeding ground of hundreds of microscopic worms and can easily infect a person.
- Worms can also enter the body through fluids. Do not drink water you are not too sure of. Try to drink only fluids that you are sure are hygienic and are clean.
- Cook your food thoroughly, particularly the meats, at high temperatures. Meats can have worms in them; and if these worms are not killed, these can find a way to infect your body.
- Keeping your surroundings clean and bathing every day is one way of getting rid of worms. Maintaining basic hygiene is one sure shot method of doing away with hookworms for good.
Don’t forget to wear shoes, especially if you’re traveling in tropical, subtropical or developing countries. Hookworms multiply by laying eggs, which then leave the body during defecation. Once the eggs reach dirt, they grow mature and develop into a larva that lays low waiting for a person or animal, so that they can breed in them for a year at least. The larva then penetrates the foot and begins its movement towards the intestines. So if you are living in a place which is known to be infested with hookworm or other parasites like that, take care of the fact that you need to wear shoes to prevent them from entering your body.

Diagnose Right

Hookworm infections can be diagnosed at a lab, by inspecting a stool sample for eggs. If there’s an infection, the severity of it will be found out by looking at the number of eggs.

An infection can be treated with anthelmintic (anti-worm) medication, such as albendazole or mebendazole, which your doctor can prescribe. You’ll need to take the allopathic medication for one to three days. The medications are usually spot on and suit everybody, with minimum side effects. Albendazole or another medication called ivermectin can be used to treat a cutaneous larva migrans which are an infection of the skin.

If you are suffering from anemia because of the diminishing red blood cells, you will have to take iron supplements. Supplementing with folic acids is another way of getting your red blood cells back on track.

You can easily control hookworm infections by taking the right precautions. Being more aware is one way of dealing with the infection. Precautions and the right medications can save you medical bills and a lot of hassles. So keep yourself informed and nip the infection right in the bud!

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