

Trichinosis Fact Sheet

What is it Trichinosis?

Trichinosis is a disease caused by the roundworm *Trichinella spiralis*. The parasite larvae can migrate and embed in the muscles. People primarily get this disease from eating wild game that is not properly cooked. This disease is not common in Minnesota.

How do people get Trichinosis?

People can become infected with Trichinosis from eating raw or undercooked meat that contains the roundworm larvae. It is most commonly found in wild game meat (such as bear, wild feline, fox, dog, wolf, horse, seal, and walrus) and less commonly, pork. After the meat with the parasite larvae is eaten, the larvae grow into worms in the intestines, which reproduce and make larvae that go into the bloodstream and travel to the skeletal muscle and embed.

What are the symptoms of Trichinosis?

A few days after eating the roundworm larvae they mature and begin reproducing; during this time symptoms can include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, fatigue, and abdominal pain. As the larvae go into the bloodstream and embed in the muscle; symptoms can include headaches, fevers, chills, weakness, cough, muscle pain, achy joints, pain/swelling around the face and eyes, light sensitivity, pink eye, itchy skin, extreme thirst, and sometimes incoordination and heart/lung problems. Symptoms can last a few months, to many months in severe cases. The severity depends on how many larvae were ingested.

What is the treatment for Trichinosis?

A mild case may not be noticed. Trichinosis is treated with anti-parasitic drugs, and can be fatal if severe cases are not treated. There is no treatment once the larvae embed in the muscles, pain relievers can help.

How can I prevent getting Trichinosis?

The best way to prevent Trichinosis is to cook meat completely to at least 145°F internal temperature. Make sure pork is thoroughly cooked to at least 160°F and all pink areas have turned grey; pork less than 6 inches thick, can also be frozen at 5°F for 20 days (not as effective for killing the larvae in wild game meat). Curing (salting), drying, smoking, or microwaving are not effective methods for killing the larvae. Thoroughly clean any equipment used to prepare the meat.



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