



## Trichinellosis (Trichinosis) Fact Sheet

### **What is Trichinellosis?**

Trichinellosis, also called trichinosis, is an infection with a species of parasitic worm called *Trichinella*.

### **Who is at risk for trichinellosis?**

If you eat raw or undercooked meats, particularly pork or wild game, you are at risk for trichinellosis. In Alaska, trichinellosis is mainly associated with eating undercooked meat from bears, walruses, and seals.

### **How does trichinellosis spread?**

*Trichinella* is spread by eating meat of an infected animal. It is not spread between people.

### **What are the symptoms of a trichinellosis infection?**

Symptoms may range from very mild to severe and relate to the number of infectious worms consumed in meat. Nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, fatigue, fever, and abdominal discomfort are the first symptoms of trichinellosis. Headaches, fevers, chills, cough, eye swelling, aching joints and muscle pains, itchy skin, diarrhea, or constipation follow the first symptoms. If the infection is heavy, patients may experience difficulty coordinating movements, and have heart and breathing problems. In severe cases, death can occur. For mild to moderate infections, most symptoms subside within a few months. Fatigue, weakness, and diarrhea may last for months.

### **How soon after infection will symptoms appear?**

Abdominal symptoms can occur 1-2 days after infection. Further symptoms usually start 2-8 weeks after eating contaminated meat.

### **What should I do if I think I have trichinellosis?**

See your healthcare provider who can order tests and treat symptoms of trichinellosis infection. You should tell your health care provider if you have eaten raw or undercooked meat, especially bear, walrus, or seal.

### **How is trichinellosis infection diagnosed?**

A blood test or a muscle biopsy can be used to diagnose *Trichinella*.

### **How is trichinellosis infection treated?**

There are medicines available to treat trichinellosis. It's important to begin treatment as soon as possible.

### **How can I prevent trichinellosis?**

- Cook meats until the juices run clear or to an internal temperature of 170° F.
- Freeze pork less than 6 inches thick for 20 days at 5° F to kill any worms.
- Cook wild game meat thoroughly. **Freezing wild game meats, unlike freezing pork products, even for long periods of time, will not effectively kill all worms.**
- Cook all meat fed to pigs or other wild animals.
- Clean meat grinders thoroughly if you prepare your own ground meats.
- Curing (salting), drying, smoking, or microwaving meat does not consistently kill infective worms.