

Diseases Fact Sheet - Trichinosis

South Dakota Department of Health

Office of Disease Prevention Services - 605-773-3737 -(1-800-592-1861 in South Dakota only)

This material is provided for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for medical care. We are not able to answer personal medical questions. Please see your health care provider concerning appropriate care, treatment or other medical advice.

What is it?

Trichinosis is a foodborne disease caused by a microscopic roundworm.

Who gets trichinosis?

Anyone who eats undercooked meat of infected animals can develop trichinosis. Pork products are implicated more often than other meats.

How is trichinosis spread?

Animals such as pigs, dogs, cats, rats and many wild animals including fox, wolf, polar bear and arctic marine mammals harbor the parasite. When parasites are passed in the feces, they infect new animals. When humans eat infected pig meat that has been improperly cooked, they become infected. Person-to-person spread does not occur.

What are the symptoms of trichinosis?

The symptoms usually start with fever, muscle soreness, pain and swelling around the eyes. Thirst, profuse sweating, chills, weakness and tiredness may develop. Chest pain may be experienced, since the parasite may become imbedded in the diaphragm (the thin muscle separating the lungs from abdominal organs).

How soon after infection do symptoms appear?

The incubation period varies depending upon the number of parasites in the meat and the amount eaten. It can range from five to 45 days but is usually eight to 15 days.

Does past infection with trichinosis make a person immune?

Partial immunity may develop from infection.

What is the treatment for trichinosis?

A drug called Mebandazole is used in treatment.



SOUTH DAKOTA PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY

Environmental Health Testing | Forensic Chemistry | Medical Microbiology

What can be the effect of not being treated for trichinosis?

Failure to treat could be fatal.

What can be done to prevent the spread of trichinosis?

The best prevention is to make sure that pork products are properly cooked. The desirable temperature is at least 150 degrees F. Storing infected meat in a freezer with a temperature no higher than -13 degrees F. for 10 days will also destroy the parasite.