

**BASICS OF PREVENTING PARASITIC INFECTIONS AMONG CHILDREN**

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**Annotation.** The widespread occurrence of infectious and parasitic diseases among humans and animals contributes to the intensive contamination of various environmental objects, such as soil, water, household items, vegetables, greens, fish, and meat products, with helminth eggs—the causative agents of these diseases. Failure to follow personal hygiene rules and the lack of elementary preventive measures not only among humans but also among animals lead to the contamination of the environment with parasite eggs and larvae. All of this contributes to an increase in cases of parasitic diseases not only among animals but also among humans, especially children.

**Keywords:** Parasitic diseases, infestation, children, environment, food, water.

**Relevance of the topic.** Children and adolescents account for 70-90% of parasitic infections. The main reason for this is that children usually pay less attention to hygiene rules and actively explore their surroundings. Young children often suffer from two or three types of parasitic diseases simultaneously. When infected with a single type of helminth or protozoa, the child's immune system weakens, making them more susceptible to other parasitic diseases and infections. Parasitic infections cause significant harm to the growing body of a child: their protective functions decrease, they feel unwell, experience frequent mood swings, and their academic performance declines. Therefore, it is recommended that children undergo regular testing for the most common parasitic diseases to prevent parasitic infections.

With the arrival of summer, children's interaction with the environment increases. They tend to put almost everything they pick up into their mouths. At the same time, the ingestion of non-edible objects raises the risk of infection with helminths (parasites) whose life cycle is linked to the environment. Parasites feed at the expense of the host organism. If children are in organized groups, their risk of contracting parasitic infections increases significantly. Most parasites enter the human body through contaminated water, food, and dirty hands.

To prevent the development of infectious processes, hygiene rules must be followed: regularly washing hands, maintaining cleanliness at home, carefully washing fruits and vegetables, and using protective gloves when working in the garden. Meat and fish should be thoroughly cooked before consumption. Undercooked food, raw smoked or lightly salted animal products can be sources of parasites.

Finally, almost all young children occasionally swallow water while swimming in open water bodies. Freshwater sources, especially still water, may contain helminths and microorganisms that can enter the child's body and start parasitizing inside. Following these simple rules can help reduce the risk of helminth infestations by approximately 60-70%. However, it is important to remember that the risk of parasitic infections is always present. Parents should not ignore recommendations for screening children for helminthiasis and protozoal infections. This screening is typically conducted once a year at a medical and preventive institution after the summer holidays.

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One of the most common reasons for children's visits to infectious disease clinics is contagious diseases. The causes of these diseases vary widely, from bacterial and viral infections to parasitic infestations. The primary and most effective preventive measure is cleanliness. Regular wet cleaning of rooms, vacuuming carpets, pillows, blankets, and mattresses, and avoiding shaking out bedding and clothing are essential. It is also crucial to ensure that fruits, vegetables, and eggs are properly washed. Although this precaution may seem unnecessary, unwashed produce is often a source of parasites that enter a child's body.

Parents should teach children personal hygiene habits. Washing hands before meals should become as natural as sleeping and eating. Another important aspect is that children with habits such as nail-biting or putting objects like pencils into their mouths are more susceptible to helminth infections.

Many experts believe that unlike bacteria and viruses, parasitic infections can be prevented. To do so, it is necessary to follow simple personal hygiene rules, monitor the health of pets, and ensure proper heat treatment of food.

Pets are often a major source of parasitic infections in children. Cats and dogs, in particular, can transmit serious diseases such as toxoplasmosis and helminthic infestations. Therefore, washing hands with soap after handling animals is essential. Regular deworming of pets can also be an effective preventive measure.

Sandboxes, which often become children's play areas, play a significant role in the spread of helminth infections. If left uncovered, sandboxes can easily turn into litter boxes for stray cats and dogs. To prevent this, sandboxes should be covered with canopies and cleaned regularly. Parasites can be found in contaminated fruits, vegetables, raw meat, water, and even milk. To minimize the risk of parasitic infections, fruits, vegetables, and greens should be thoroughly washed with boiled water before consumption. Animal and poultry meat should undergo full heat treatment before use. Fish products are also not free from parasites. River fish, in particular, may contain parasites that cause a severe disease called opisthorchiasis. Therefore, fish should also be carefully cooked before consumption.

Children should not drink raw water or milk. Infections that cause dysentery and amoebiasis are often found in unboiled water and raw milk. Intestinal parasitic infections can manifest as acute infectious diseases with severe clinical symptoms, including digestive disturbances, fever, and other signs of intoxication.

Another source of parasitic infections is blood-sucking insects such as mosquitoes, flies, and cockroaches.

A.A. Kozlovsky classified the prevention of helminth infections into specific and non-specific measures: Non-specific prevention includes: Maintaining a healthy lifestyle; Observing sanitary and hygiene practices at home, in childcare facilities, and in medical institutions; Proper food handling and cooking practices; Using only boiled, bottled, or filtered water; Preventing environmental contamination with feces; Proper care and deworming of pets when necessary; Early detection and timely treatment of infected individuals; Specific prevention includes: Chemoprophylaxis of helminth

infections for children at risk, as well as for children with persistent eosinophilia in their blood tests, conducted once or twice a year (in spring or autumn).

Khalafli Kh.N. identifies the following key tasks in addressing the issue of intestinal parasitosis and children's health:

- Rationalizing approaches to comprehensive examination of children for major types of intestinal parasitosis
- Assessing the prevalence of intestinal parasitosis among children
- Reliably evaluating the impact of intestinal parasitosis on children's physical and mental development, as well as their overall health indicators
- Identifying epidemiological patterns of intestinal parasitosis in children
- Assessing the effectiveness of primary antiparasitic treatments for children with single and mixed parasitic infections
- Developing methods for restoring the health of children affected by intestinal parasitosis
- Testing regionally adapted epidemiological prevention measures to reduce the risk of infection in children

### Conclusion

A review of literature from the past 10-15 years shows that the prevalence of parasitic diseases remains high, particularly among children, and has not significantly declined. This issue is also observed in our country. Although various diagnostic and treatment methods have been proposed for these diseases, improving primary prevention measures and enhancing public medical and sanitary awareness are crucial in reducing the incidence of parasitic infections.

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