What is trichinosis?
Trichinosis, also called trichinellosis, is a disease caused by *Trichinella spiralis*. Disease occurs when the larvae migrate to and become embedded in muscle tissue. This is a rare disease in Minnesota with a total of six cases seen from 2006-2011.

How is trichinosis transmitted?
People become infected by eating raw or undercooked meat that has larvae encysted in it. People mainly become infected from eating wild game meat (i.e., bear) and occasionally pork. After eating contaminated meat, mature worms produce larvae, which are absorbed into the bloodstream from the intestines. Once in the bloodstream, the larvae travel to the skeletal muscle and become embedded to form a cyst.

What are the symptoms of trichinosis?
Early symptoms include diarrhea, fever, and abdominal pain as the worms mature and produce larvae in the intestines. These symptoms occur a few days after infection. Later symptoms occur when the larvae have penetrated the bloodstream and embedded into the muscle; they include muscle pain, extreme thirst, pain around the eyes, chills, and in extreme infections, heart and lung problems.

How long do these symptoms last?
Generally, symptoms last a couple of months, and in severe cases, symptoms can last many months.

What is the treatment for trichinosis?
Antibiotics are used to treat the disease. If a person has a severe infection and does not seek treatment, death can occur.

What are the chances of becoming infected with trichinosis in the United States?
The chances of getting trichinosis in the United States are extremely low. Fewer than 100 cases are reported in the United States annually and are more often associated with eating raw or undercooked wild game meats than pork products.

Can I become infected from contact with infected people?
No. Trichinosis is not transmitted person-to-person. People only come infected from eating meat that contains the roundworms.

Trichinellosis is acquired by ingesting meat containing cysts (encysted larvae) of *Trichinella*. Rats and rodents are primarily responsible for maintaining the endemicity of this infection. Carnivorous/omnivorous animals, like pigs or bears, feed on infected rodents or meat from other animals. Different animal hosts are implicated in the life cycle of the different species of *Trichinella*. Humans are accidentally infected when eating improperly processed meat of these carnivorous animals (or eating food contaminated with such meat).

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

How can I prevent trichinosis?
The best way to prevent trichinosis is to cook all meat completely (at least 170°F). For pork, this means once the inside is gray and there are no areas of pink. Freezing pork for 20 days at 5°F will also kill any worms present; however, this does not work as effectively for other meats like wild game meat. Clean any meat-cutting or grinding equipment well to prevent any cross-contamination to other meat.

Additional Information:
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- U.S. National Library of Medicine

This fact sheet is meant to provide basic information. For specific health concerns please contact your physician or veterinarian. Updated 2012.