



Giardia

Giardia is a microscopic protozoan organism that can infect most mammals, *including humans*. The parasite invades cells lining the intestinal tract, causing bowel irritation and damage. There, the parasites reproduce and shed into the stool to pass out of the body. This stage of the parasite is very hearty and can remain infective in the environment for long periods of time. Infection occurs when parasites are ingested in contaminated water, stool, plant material or food. Even licking a few drops of contaminated water or a few parasites off of the paws or coat can potentially cause infection.

Pets infected with Giardia may or may not show obvious symptoms. Pets that do not appear ill can still shed the parasite in their stool, acting as a source of infection for other pets or human family members.

Common symptoms seen during infection may include:

- Decreased energy
- Weight loss
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

Important Points

- Humans can also be infected by Giardia. People most often become infected by drinking water from contaminated sources or from direct contact with other infected humans. It is not known if dogs and cats can directly transmit Giardia to people, but because the same strains of Giardia have been found in humans, dogs, and cats, it is recommended that giardiasis in cats and dogs be treated as a potentially communicable (zoonotic) disease.
- All infected pets in the household should be treated. All stools should be cleaned up at least once daily during the treatment period and regularly thereafter. Use all medications as prescribed by your veterinarian.
- Kennels and dog runs should be disinfected with a diluted bleach solution and rinsed well, daily, during the treatment period. Diluted bleach may be used at 1:16 (one part bleach and 16 parts water) or 1:32 (one part bleach and 32 parts water) dilutions to kill the Giardia cysts.

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