

Giardia in Dogs

Giardia is a single-celled parasite that lives in your dog's intestine. It infects older dogs but more frequently infects puppies. Dogs become infected when they swallow *Giardia* that may be present in water or other substances that have been soiled with feces.

How will *Giardia* affect my dog?

Many dogs infected with *Giardia* do not get any disease. Giardiasis, the disease caused by *Giardia* infection, usually results in diarrhea. Having giardiasis a long time can cause weight loss; generally poor condition; and even death, when the disease is serious.

How do I prevent my dog from getting *Giardia*?

The best way to prevent *Giardia* infection is to make sure that your dog has safe, clean drinking water. It is important not to allow dogs to drink water from areas where other animals have left their feces.

Your veterinarian can perform a test on your dog's feces to see if it has giardiasis. If your dog is infected with *Giardia*, your veterinarian can prescribe safe, effective treatment.

To prevent spreading *Giardia* (and other parasites), pick up the feces left by your dog immediately and place it in the trash. Be sure to avoid contact with the feces by using gloves, a bag over your hand, or a scooping device.

Can humans be harmed by *Giardia*?

Giardia is a common cause of diarrhea in people, but dog *Giardia* is not generally considered to spread from animals to humans. While human *Giardia* may infect dogs and then be passed on to humans, the majority of human cases are of human origin.

- *Giardia* in dogs can cause diarrhea, vomiting, weight loss, poor condition, or death. However, many infected dogs show no symptoms.
- People can get *giardia*, causing diarrhea or other problems, but rarely from dogs.
- Dogs get *giardia* from water that has been soiled with feces. Give your dog safe, clean water to drink.
- Pick up your dog's feces immediately, avoiding contact with your skin.

Information from The Companion Animal Parasite Council (<http://www.petsandparasites.org/dog-owners/giardia.html>) and The Dog Health Guide (<http://www.dog-health-guide.org/causesofgiardiaindogs.html>)

Where did your dog pick up the infection?

Dogs are infected from swallowing the Giardia cysts, usually in contaminated water

Water can be contaminated from feces from infected dogs or other wild animals

Giardia is not transmitted from casual contact

Giardia is more easily spread when the environment remains wet as dry environments do not allow the cysts to persist

Cleaning the environment

Pick-up solid waste from dogs as soon as possible and dispose of properly

Dilute bleach or a quaternary ammonium compound (Lysol, triple-2, or Kennel Care) can be used to clean indoor surfaces if needed to eliminate the cysts

To prevent re-infection

Dogs can re-infect themselves from cysts that are stuck to their coats and/or anus

Infected dogs should be bathed regularly with a mild dog shampoo, concentrating especially on the perineal region



Giardia cyst
Parasite form ingested by dogs



Giardia trophozoite
Parasite form living in dogs