



Giardiasis: More Common Than You Think!

M. Iqbal, DVM, MS, PhD; Family Pet Hospital, Perry Hall, MD 21128

Giardia is a one-celled protozoan organism found in soil, water, or food contaminated with the feces of infected animals. Giardia lives in the intestine of infected dogs, cats, and other livestock. The cyst form of Giardia can survive outside the body for long period of time. The prevalence of giardiasis is 5% in healthy cats and dogs and 15% in clinically ill animals.

Who gets Giardia?

Although dogs and cats can get Giardia but immunosuppressed pets and pets living in crowded environments are at highest risk of Giardia infection. Younger animals are more likely to show clinical signs.

Can Humans also get Giardia?

Yes. Giardia has a zoonotic potential- can affect pet owners as well. Most cats and dogs harbor Giardia are not considered a significant human health risk though. It's not clear why and how some gets and others remain immune to Giardiasis even if their pets are infected.

What to look for?

Gastrointestinal signs including pale and soft stool (diarrhea) with mucus and a strong odor; fatty contents may be present in the stool. Pet may show signs mild to moderate discomfort from abdominal pain.

How is Giardia spread?

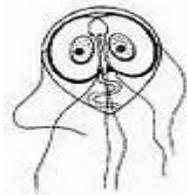
Fecal-oral contamination- meaning this parasite is most commonly spread through infected water, food, feces and anything contaminated with these substances. The "tougher" cyst form can live for several months in

cool wet conditions.

How is Giardia diagnosed?

This parasite is difficult to find on fecal examination. A simple in-house test (SNAP® Giardia) is used for diagnosis and takes up to 10 minutes to complete.

What is the Treatment of Giardia? Once diagnosed then treatment is fairly simple. Ask Dr. Iqbal at the Family Pet Hospital's for appropriate treatment options. Because of zoonotic aspect of Giardia, patient monitoring by SNAP Giardia Test is very important.



Schematic picture of Giardia.

How do I protect myself to contract Giardia?

Environmental disinfection-Because the Giardia cysts can contaminate and live in the environment so easily, environmental control is a must. Feces should be removed daily and contaminated surfaces disinfected by steam cleaning or diluted house hold bleach.

Pet disinfection: Infected pets should be bathed with shampoos to remove fecal debris and cysts. Isolate sick pets in an easily disinfected area. Treat and isolate all

affected symptomatic pets. Bathe after using recreational water - lakes, streams, etc.



Giardia in the intestine.

Personal prevention: Practice good sanitation and personal hygiene to protect yourself and your family. Boil any drinking water you are unsure about. Giardia does not survive in hot, dry environments. Letting surfaces dry out well will help.

How to deal with persistent or recurrence infection of Giardia?

If not treated appropriately or taken measures described in "How do I protect myself to contract Giardia" reinfection can occur. Pet should be treated and retested as recommended by Dr. Iqbal at Family Pet Hospital.

(410) 529-7297 (PAWS)
www.FamilyPetsHospital.com
info@FamilyPetsHospital.com

Partnership in Pet Care = Happy + Healthy + Longer living Pet