



Giardia

Giardia is a microscopic protozoan organism that can be carried in the intestinal tract of most mammals. It is present in up to 15% of puppies, 11% of kittens and about 15% of pets adopted from shelters. Giardia can cause a severe and very uncomfortable diarrhea. You may know it as the disease you get from drinking untreated water while camping and backpacking, but it can be passed directly from your pets to you!

We do not see the transmission of Giardia from pets to people very often, but it is possible. Transmission is most common amongst people who are immunosuppressed – young children, the elderly and those on medications or with diseases that suppress the immune system. We feel it is wise to take the simple precautions necessary to protect your family, both people and pets, against this intestinal disease.

We recommend testing all puppies and kittens for Giardia on their first visit, even if they are not having any signs of infection. We also recommend testing all pets adopted from shelters or other multi-animal situations. This allows us to find infections that may be dangerous to the people in your family. The test requires only a little feces or a rectal swab.

If your pet has a positive Giardia test we will start treatment immediately. We will also ask you to:

1. Clean any of the bedding your pet is using daily
2. Wash your pet daily, especially if your pet has any feces on it. This will prevent re-contamination of your pet, and help clear the infection sooner.
3. Have all family members wash their hands after handling the pet until the infection is cleared.
4. Allow us to repeat the Giardia test every 3-4 weeks until the test is negative or we decide to stop treatment.

On occasion a pet will prove to be a chronic carrier of Giardia. These pets do not respond to any form of treatment. Luckily, we have never seen one of these low level carriers pass the disease to a person or another pet. Our doctors will help to guide you if this situation develops in your home.

If you have any questions or concerns, call us. We are here to help!

We love what we do and it shows.

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