



Animal Alternatives Holistic Health Clinic
Anne Lampru, DVM, CVA
238 E Bearss Ave · Tampa, FL 33613
Phone: (813)265-2411 · Fax: (813)962-4477



Giardiasis

General Information

Giardiasis is an intestinal disease of people, dogs, cats and other animals. It is caused by a microorganism called *Giardia* (a protozoa), which is swallowed when contaminated stool, food or water is consumed. Infected individuals pass the infective cysts in their stool and the cycle begins again. Because the parasite is protected by an outer shell, it can survive outside the body and in the environment for long periods of time (i.e., months). Diagnosis may be difficult; therefore, repeated microscopic examinations of multiple stool samples, and in some cases more specific tests, are often needed to find the cysts.

Symptoms

Symptoms of giardiasis normally begin 1 to 2 weeks (average 7 days) after becoming infected. *Giardia* infection can cause a variety of intestinal signs or symptoms, which include:

- Diarrhea
- Gas or flatulence
- Greasy stools that tend to float
- Stomach or abdominal cramps
- Upset stomach or nausea

These symptoms may lead to weight loss and dehydration. Some pets and people with *Giardia* infection have no symptoms at all.

Public Health Significance

During the past 2 decades, *Giardia* infection has become recognized as a common cause of waterborne disease in humans in the United States. *Giardia* can be found worldwide and within every region of the United States. *Giardia* can be picked up from surfaces (such as bathroom fixtures, changing tables, diaper pails, or toys) contaminated with feces from an infected person or animal, drinking contaminated water, eating uncooked food that is contaminated and swimming in contaminated water.

Good personal hygiene should be practiced in homes where giardiasis has been diagnosed in a pet. Your pet's stool should be cleaned up and properly disposed of. Children should not be allowed to handle the stool or play in areas of known contamination.

Important Points in Treatment

1. Laboratory tests are often required to evaluate the patient's response during and after treatment.
2. Sun exposure and drying help eliminate *Giardia* from your yard.
3. *Medication*: Give all medicate as directed. Call the doctor if you cannot give the medication.
4. It may take several treatments and even different medications to clear the infection.

Notify the Doctor if Any of the Following Occur

- Your pet's diarrhea persists.
- Your pet's general health worsens.