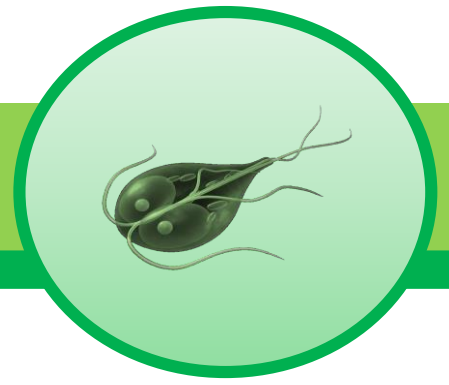


# Giardia



## What is Giardia?

Giardia is a zoonotic protozoan parasite. This means that it is infectious to both humans and pets. Giardia is actually the most common intestinal parasite affecting humans in North America. Therefore, even if your pet is not showing symptoms, we recommend treatment if Giardia shows up on his/her fecal exam.

Giardia may survive for long periods of time in the environment, due to its ability to form cysts. Contaminated water is a major source of giardia infection.

The cysts are ingested and travel to the intestinal tract, where they release trophozoites, which cause **diarrhea**. Once infected, it takes approximately 5 to 12 days for giardia to be detected in your pet's stool. Diarrhea may precede the shedding of giardia making it difficult to diagnose. As well, giardia may shed intermittently, adding to a difficult diagnosis.

## How do you test for Giardia?

Special tests are needed to diagnose Giardia in your pet's stool. Therefore, a fresh stool sample will most likely be sent to the lab for analysis, rather than run in our in-house laboratory, if Giardia is suspected.

## Treatment for Giardia

Treatment for Giardia involves a broad spectrum dewormer called Fenbendazole (Panacur). As well, Metronidazole (Flagyl) may also be used. Sometimes both medications may be used together. Treatment should also include bathing, as infective cysts may stick to the patient's fur, allowing a source for re-infection. Lastly, the patient's environment must be adequately decontaminated with bleach (1:32 in water), and soiled areas promptly cleaned to avoid re-infection or potential for human infection.

