

# ***Giardia* Infection (Giardiasis)**

## **What is giardiasis?**

Giardiasis (GEE-are-DYE-uh-sis) is a diarrheal illness caused by a one-celled, microscopic parasite, *Giardia intestinalis*. Once an animal (or person) has been infected with *Giardia intestinalis*, the parasite lives in the intestine and is passed in the stool. Because the parasite is protected by an outer shell, it can survive outside the body and in the environment for long periods of time.

## **How did my pet get giardiasis?**

The *Giardia* parasite lives in the intestine of infected humans or animals. Millions of germs can be released in a bowel movement. *Giardia* is found in soil, food, water, or surfaces that have been contaminated with the feces of an infected human or animal. Your pet ingested the parasite by drinking water infected with *Giardia*, or by eating or licking something that has come in contact with feces that is infected with *Giardia*.

## **What are the symptoms of *Giardia*?**

Symptoms of *Giardia* may or may not include:

- Diarrhea
- Gas or flatulence
- Greasy stools
- Stomach cramps
- Upset stomach or nausea

These symptoms may lead to weight loss or dehydration. Some pets have no symptoms at all.

## **How is *Giardia* infection diagnosed?**

We use a test developed by Idexx Laboratories in Westbrook to diagnose *Giardia*. A small sample of fresh stool is needed. The test takes 8 minutes.

## **How is *Giardia* treated?**

There are two treatments for *Giardia*: Tablets or powder, usually for 5 days. We should perform a retest two weeks following the end of treatment.

