

FORBES Veterinary Clinic

GIARDIA IN DOGS

Understanding This Common Intestinal Parasite

Giardia is a microscopic parasite that lives in the intestines and can cause diarrhoea and digestive upset in dogs. While many infected dogs show mild signs, some—especially puppies—can become quite unwell.

Early diagnosis, treatment, and good hygiene help prevent reinfection and protect other pets.

GIARDIA
SPREADS
THROUGH
CONTAMINATED
WATER, FAECES,
AND ENVIRONMENTS.



1 WHAT IS GIARDIA?

Giardia is a microscopic parasite that lives in the small intestine.

It can:

- ✓ Interfere with nutrient absorption
- ✓ Cause digestive upset
- ✓ Lead to weight loss
- ✓ Spread between dogs

Some infected dogs show no signs but can still spread the parasite.



2 RECOGNISE THE SIGNS

Signs may include:

- ✓ Soft stools or diarrhoea
- ✓ Foul-smelling faeces
- ✓ Weight loss
- ✓ Poor growth in puppies
- ✓ Vomiting
- ✓ Excessive gas
- ✓ Poor coat condition
- ✓ Lethargy

Symptoms may come and go, making Giardia difficult to recognise.



3 HOW DO DOGS GET GIARDIA?

Dogs become infected by swallowing Giardia cysts.

Common sources include:

- ✓ Contaminated water
- ✓ Infected faeces
- ✓ Dog parks
- ✓ Kennels and boarding facilities
- ✓ Contaminated food bowls
- ✓ Grooming contaminated fur
- ✓ Shared environments with infected dogs



Puppies and dogs living in groups are at greater risk.

4 WHICH DOGS ARE MOST AT RISK?

Higher-risk dogs include:

- ✓ Puppies
- ✓ Shelter and rescue dogs
- ✓ Boarding kennel dogs
- ✓ Dogs attending daycare
- ✓ Immunocompromised dogs
- ✓ Multi-dog households

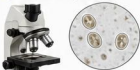


Any dog exposed to contaminated environments can become infected.

5 HOW IS GIARDIA DIAGNOSED?

Your veterinarian may:

- ✓ Perform a physical examination
- ✓ Recommend faecal testing
- ✓ Perform Giardia antigen testing
- ✓ Examine faecal samples microscopically
- ✓ Assess clinical signs and history



Multiple tests may sometimes be needed because Giardia cysts are shed intermittently.

6 TREATMENT

Treatment may include:

- ✓ Prescription antiparasitic medications
- ✓ Dietary management
- ✓ Supportive care
- ✓ Repeat testing if required
- ✓ Treatment of other affected pets in the household



Most dogs recover well with appropriate treatment.

7 PREVENTING REINFECTION

To reduce reinfection:

- ✓ Clean up faeces promptly
- ✓ Wash food and water bowls daily
- ✓ Bathe affected dogs if recommended
- ✓ Wash bedding regularly
- ✓ Disinfect contaminated areas
- ✓ Prevent drinking from puddles or stagnant water



Environmental control is essential for successful treatment.

8 PREVENTION

You can reduce the risk by:

- ✓ Providing clean drinking water
- ✓ Avoiding contaminated water sources
- ✓ Maintaining good hygiene
- ✓ Regular veterinary health checks
- ✓ Prompt investigation of diarrhoea
- ✓ Routine parasite prevention programs



Prevention is easier than treating repeated infections.

9 CAN PEOPLE GET GIARDIA?

Some Giardia species can affect people.

Good hygiene practices include:

- ✓ Washing hands after handling pets
- ✓ Cleaning up faeces promptly
- ✓ Disinfecting contaminated areas
- ✓ Preventing children from contact with contaminated faeces
- ✓ Maintaining regular parasite control

Good hygiene protects both pets and families.



10 ADDITIONAL TIPS



Some infected dogs never show signs.



Puppies are most likely to become ill.



Environmental cleaning is vital.



Follow-up testing may be recommended.

11 EVERY DOG COUNTS

If your dog develops persistent diarrhoea, weight loss, vomiting, or digestive upset, speak with your veterinarian about Giardia testing.

Prompt diagnosis, treatment, and good hygiene help protect your dog and other pets from Giardia infection.

