



Roundworms & Your Health

Roundworms (*Toxocara* species) are common parasites of dogs and cats (more than 25 percent of pets are infected). In particular, puppies and kittens are often infected regardless of their quality of care. Pets can get infected from their mother or by eating infected animals (such as rodents). Some animals may not show signs of illness, while others may vomit, have diarrhea, or have a potbelly appearance. Roundworms, which look like white earthworms, can sometimes be found in your pet's vomit or feces. Humans can also become infected. An estimated 10,000 Americans become infected each year, with young children being at greatest risk of illness.



Promptly pick up your pet's feces and don't let animals urinate or defecate in play areas.

Disease Highlights:

- **Transmission:** People get infected by accidentally eating dirt or objects contaminated with feces. Young children are at higher risk because they are more likely to play outside and put dirty hands or objects in their mouths.
- **Risk to Humans:** People at highest risk include those who are more likely to come in contact with dirt or animal feces (such as young children, farmers, gardeners, and pet owners).
- **Signs in Humans:** Fever, coughing, and stomach pain. Loss of vision has also been reported.

How to Reduce the Risk of Infection:

- Teach children not to put dirt or other objects in their mouth when playing outside.
- Wash hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds after playing outside, touching animals, and cleaning litter boxes.
- Disinfect hard surfaces contaminated with animal feces with household cleaners that contain bleach or ammonia. Use cleaners as directed on the label.
- Prevent your pet from defecating in children's play areas, especially beaches and playgrounds. Cover children's sandboxes when not in use to prevent animals from defecating in them.
- Clean up your dog's feces immediately when in public places or children's play areas. Frequently clean your yard of feces. Double bag feces and put them in a closed trash container for disposal. Waste can also be incinerated.
- To decrease your cat's risk of infection, prevent it from hunting rodents by keeping it indoors. To prevent your cat from getting re-infected (which is especially important after deworming), scoop the litter box daily, and clean the litter box once a week as follows: 1) double bag all litter and place in your trash can; 2) wash the box with soap and water; 3) disinfect the box for 10 minutes with a household cleaner containing bleach; 4) rinse thoroughly; 5) dry; 6) add fresh litter.
- Take all pets to a veterinarian regularly for testing and year-round deworming. All pets should receive a fecal exam at least once or twice a year.

If you think you or your child accidentally ate dirt or objects contaminated with feces, call your health care provider. Watch for symptoms (fever, coughing, stomach pain, or loss of vision) for at least three months.

For More Information Visit:

CFSPH Animal Disease Information at www.cfsph.iastate.edu/DiseaseInfo/fastfacts.php

CAPC Parasite Recommendations at www.capcvet.org/

CDC Healthy Pets Healthy People at www.cdc.gov/healthypets/

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