



GIARDIA

A. General Information

Giardia are microscopic protozoal parasites that commonly infect the intestines of people, dogs, cats, and many other animals. Infected animals and people pass infective cysts in their stool. These cysts then contaminate water supplies. If you or your dog drink any contaminated water, you can get the giardia infection.

Giardia infection causes any of the following: soft & mushy stools, diarrhea, excessive gas, a painful abdomen, mucous stools, greasy stools, bloody stools.

The most common means of people contracting Giardia are:

- drinking stream or lake water in wilderness areas.
- allowing pets which have contracted the disease to lick their hands and face.
- drinking contaminated well water (particularly common at ski resorts).

Many people and pets are infected with Giardia and do not know it. Fecal testing is the definitive answer.

B. Diagnosis & Treatment

Fecal microscopic exams can diagnose approximately 40% of the cases, but the most accurate testing is by sending a large fecal sample to a lab for Elisa testing.

If your pet is diagnosed positive for Giardia, you need to:

1. Clean up all your pet's fecal material in the yard and dispose of it.
2. Begin medicating your pet with the prescription from *Windsor Animal Hospital*.
3. When the medication is finished, wait 8 weeks then collect a small amount of stool from 3 consecutive days (as cysts are not shed every day, but will be shed within a 3-day period), and drop it off at *Windsor Animal Hospital* for a recheck Elisa test.
4. See your own physician to have your own stool checked for Giardia.

C. Testing

If a patient has a positive antigen on a fecal giardia test, realize that the Giardia antigen can stay positive for 6-8 weeks after the patient has cleared the Giardia infection. Current practice is not to recheck a giardia antigen until it has been 8 weeks post medical treatment.

If a patient has a **positive** fecal test for intestinal worms and a **positive** giardia antigen test, *Windsor Animal Hospital* will recheck the fecal test for worm eggs 2 weeks post medical treatment, but inform the client it is for the worms only and the Giardia test will need to be repeated 8 weeks later.

A stool sample is needed now.

A recheck stool sample (from 3 consecutive days) is needed on _____.