

# Giardia and pets



Utah Department of  
**Health & Human**  
Services

## How is Giardia spread?

Dog and cat feces, or poop, can contain Giardia germs and may make people sick even when their pet appears healthy. Symptoms in both people and pets may include diarrhea, gas, abdominal discomfort, nausea, and vomiting. It is possible to be infected and have no signs or symptoms of illness.



## Can I get Giardia infection from my pet?

The chance of you getting Giardia from dogs or cats is low, as the type of Giardia that infects them is generally not the same type that infects humans. If you own exotic pets or other household pets, contact your veterinarian for more information and guidance. Some strains of Giardia can be shared between humans and animals, including chinchillas, beavers, birds, opossums, and monkeys.

## How can my pet get infected with Giardia?

Young pets have a higher risk of illness than adult pets. Your pet can get infected with Giardia when it:

- Comes into contact with infected poop from another animal
- Rolls or plays in contaminated soil
- Licks its body after contact with a contaminated surface
  - Example: dirty bathroom area or crate
- Drinks water from a contaminated body of water

## How do I protect myself when my pet has a Giardia infection?

- Wear gloves when you garden to reduce the risk of coming into contact with infected poop or soil
- Clean and disinfect household surfaces regularly
  - Particularly pet bedding, water, and food bowls
- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds



## How long does Giardia survive in the environment?

Giardia can survive for several months in cold water or soil. Giardia survives much longer in moist, cool environments than in dry, warm environments with direct sunlight.



## How do I reduce the amount of Giardia in my yard or outdoor environment?

Giardia is difficult to eliminate from the environment. To reduce the chances of your pet becoming sick or getting sick again you can:

- Remove poop from your yard and other outdoor areas
- Clean bathroom areas frequently
- Limit your pet's access to common outdoor spaces if they have diarrhea or are being treated for Giardia
- Remove standing water
- Do NOT use bleach or quaternary ammonium compounds in your soil or grass as they will not work
- Do NOT allow any new animals, especially young ones, to enter the yard or other outdoor spaces until advised by your veterinarian

