



ROUNDWORMS (Toxocariasis) FACT SHEET

What are Roundworms?

Roundworm infection, or **Toxocariasis**, occurs when the *Toxocara cati* or *Toxocara canis* parasitic worm infects a person or animal. Signs of roundworm infection can include mild to severe diarrhea in pets and serious illness in people including damage to the eyes and other organs. These worms produce eggs which are passed in the feces to the soil, where they are passed to another animal or a person.

How can I or my animals get Roundworms?

The young larval worms are spread when they contaminate food and hands and are then swallowed. The eggs develop into the larval form within the body and live in the intestines. Animals can also pass the roundworms to their young during pregnancy or through their milk.

What are the symptoms of Roundworm infection?

Roundworms cause disease when the larval form is in a person. In people, the larvae migrate through the organs of the body (visceral larval migrans) and even to the eyes (ocular larval migrans). Symptoms include:

- Fever
- Trouble breathing
- Stomach pain
- Eye pain, vision problems, or reddened eyes

Who is most at risk?

Anyone can become infected with *Toxocara*. However children and pet owners may be at higher risk.

What can I do to prevent roundworms?

- Regularly have pets seen by a veterinarian. Your veterinarian can recommend a deworming plan.
- Remove pet waste from the yard as soon as possible and wash your hands.
- Restrict animal access to the yard or any sandboxes.
- Teach children proper handwashing technique. Everyone should wash their hands after playing outside, especially if they play in dirt.
- Avoid skin contact with contaminated soil, such as walking bare-foot outdoors.

Where can I get more information?

Centers for Disease Control

http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/toxocariasis/gen_info/faqs.html

Centers for Food Security and Public Health

<http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/DiseaseInfo/disease.php?name=toxocariasis&lang=en>