What Is Giardia?

- Giardia is a parasite that lives in the intestine of people and pets.
- It’s so small you need a microscope to see it!
- Dogs, cats and many farm animals can all have Giardia in their intestines. Small pets (like chinchillas) may have it too.
- Giardia usually doesn’t make people or pets sick, but sometimes it gives them diarrhea.

Where Does Giardia Come From?

- Giardia comes from the poop from people or pets who already have Giardia in their intestine.
- If the Giardia from the poop gets into water, it can live there for a long time.
- If the poop is outside and it gets dry and hot, then the Giardia dies very fast.

How Do People Get Giardia?

- People usually get Giardia from drinking or swimming in “dirty” water that has poop in it.
- Sometimes the water might not look or taste dirty, because it takes only a very tiny amount of poop from a person or an animal in the water to infect another person or your pet.
- Sometimes people get Giardia because a tiny bit of poop gets on their hands or on their food, and then it gets in their mouth.

How Do I Know If My Pet Has Giardia?

- Most pets don’t get sick from Giardia. If they do get sick they get diarrhea, just like people.
- If your pet has diarrhea, or if your pet’s poop is too soft or smells really bad, tell an adult. Your pet might need to go to the vet.
- Your vet can actually look in your pet’s poop with a microscope to see if there is Giardia in it!
- Your vet will also check your pet to make sure there isn’t anything else making him or her sick. Your pet might need some medicine if he or she has Giardia.

Can I Get Giardia From My Pet?

Probably. Giardia can sometimes be in the poop from pets, and from people, even if they don’t look sick. But if some gets in your mouth, the Giardia might be able to make you sick. To make sure you don’t get sick, this is what you should do:

- Always wash your hands well after you play with your pet.
- Don’t touch anyone’s face (including yours!) or touch any food until you’ve washed your hands.
- Don’t touch your pet’s bum, even if it looks clean.
- Don’t let your pet lick your face.
- If you have a dog, don’t let him eat poop off the ground or drink from puddles, ponds or lakes.

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