



# Whipworms

The adult whipworm is embedded in the wall of the large intestine and cecum.



Infective larva develops inside the egg but does not hatch unless the egg is swallowed.

Eggs are passed in the faeces.

## Diagnostic Plan

History  
Physical examination  
Stool analysis  
Colonoscopy  
Therapeutic deworming

## Therapeutic Plan

Dewormers  
Supportive therapy

## Nutritional Plan

Nutrition based on individual patient evaluation including body condition and other organ system involvement or disease

Whipworms are parasites found in the colon and the cecum (a structure similar to the human appendix). Whipworm infection is a common cause of the inflammation of a dog's colon. Signs of infection include chronic diarrhoea, anaemia and weight loss. Should you be concerned about your pet having a whipworm infestation, please consult your veterinarian.

## What You Should Know About Whipworms:

Adult whipworms are white, two to three inches long and live in the colon and cecum. These worms narrow from a thick end to a slender end and thus look like a whip. Whipworms attach to the lining of the colon and cecum where they feed on tissue fluids and blood. More than 2,000 adult worms have been found in some dogs with severe cases of whipworm infestation.

One adult female whipworm may lay 2,000 or more eggs a day. These eggs leave your pet's body with the stool, contaminating kennels and yards. Under optimal humidity and temperature conditions, immature whipworms called larvae, develop within the eggs. Pets acquire whipworms when they ingest soil contaminated with these eggs. The larvae develop in the digestive tract for about 90 days before they become adults that are capable of laying eggs. Severe whipworm infection can be fatal.



## Diagnosis

Microscopic examination of a pet's stool specimen by your veterinarian may disclose the presence of whipworm eggs. It often takes examination over several days of many stool samples, before whipworm eggs are found. Even if no eggs are found, your veterinarian may think treatment for whipworms is appropriate because of the clinical signs. Blood tests may also reveal anaemia.

## Treatment and Home Care

Whipworm infections are treated with dewormers but, because of the parasite's life cycle, three or more treatments may be necessary. Diarrhoea is usually treated with medications that coat and protect the intestine and reduce intestinal spasms.

Your veterinarian may want to recheck your pet's stool seven days after dewormers are administered in order to determine the effectiveness of the treatment. Stool specimens should also be checked at regular intervals as suggested by your veterinarian, as this will allow him/her to diagnose reinfections if they occur.

Control of reinfections is difficult because whipworm eggs are among the most resistant. Daily removal of faeces (and whipworm eggs before they become infective) from your dog's kennel and your yard will gradually reduce the number of whipworm eggs in your pet's environment.

## Nutritional Plan

If your pet has a whipworm infection, your veterinarian may suggest a dietary change based on your pet's age and body condition and on the presence or absence of disease in other organs and body systems. If your pet is anaemic or has lost weight as a result of whipworm infection, your veterinarian may give you special feeding instructions. Some patients with these complications may benefit from foods with increased levels of protein and energy during the recovery process. Such foods include Hill's™ Prescription Diet™ Canine and Feline a/d. In less severe cases a highly digestible food such as Hill's Prescription Diet i/d may be a good recommendation.

After your pet's recovery is complete, your veterinarian may recommend another dietary change. Optimal nutrition should provide for a pet's needs during each stage of its life. Optimal nutrition should also reduce the health risks associated with consuming excessive amounts of sodium, calcium, phosphorus, protein and fat. Foods that avoid these harmful excesses and provide proper nutrition for each life stage include the Hill's™ Science Plan™ brand of pet foods for dogs.

## Transitioning Food

Unless recommended otherwise by your veterinarian, gradually introduce any new food over a seven-day period. Mix the new food with your pet's former food, gradually increasing its proportion until only the new food is fed.

If your pet doesn't readily accept new food, try warming canned food to body temperature and hand feeding for the first few days or mixing dry food with warm water (wait ten minutes before serving).<sup>\*</sup> Finally, be patient but firm with your pet.

<sup>\*</sup> Please note. We do not recommend adding water to cat food.



[www.hillspet.co.za/facebook](http://www.hillspet.co.za/facebook) | [www.hillspet.co.za](http://www.hillspet.co.za) | [www.puppyschool.co.za](http://www.puppyschool.co.za)

