



FACTSHEET

Intestinal Parasites

Gut health can provide a snapshot of your cat's overall wellbeing. Vomiting and diarrhoea are common symptoms of compromised gut health, and can also be signs of stress, poor quality food and incorrect portion control. Intestinal parasites can be another reason that your cat is vomiting and/or has diarrhoea. It is important to remember that intestinal parasites are zoonotic, meaning your cat can pass them onto you and vice versa. We all know the importance of flea and worm prevention (see our factsheet on [*Fleas and worms*](#)) but there are a few other 'gut bugs' that can be common if your cat has outdoor access.

What to look out for:

- **Frequency:** How often is your cat having diarrhoea? Frequency and softness of faeces can suggest that your cat has an upset stomach from a foreign body
- **Consistency of the faecal matter:** Is there any blood or mucous present? Is the faecal matter pasty looking or liquid?
- **Your cat's mood and behaviour:** Is your cat acting like their usual self? Does your cat seem flat or lethargic?

Intestinal parasites are passed on via faecal-oral transmission (i.e. ingesting a small amount of contaminated faecal matter). This might sound like something that isn't easily done but it can in fact be very easily done. Imagine your cat goes to the litter box and defecates, they scrape at the litter to bury the faeces and then come and sit on your lap. All it takes is a tiny speck of faeces to be on their paws or fur and then for that speck to get onto your clothes, you wipe your clothes with your hand and touch your face. Presto you have ingested a tiny speck of contaminated faeces without even noticing! To avoid this happening, wear gloves when changing your cat's litter tray and dispose of all faecal matter properly and promptly. Always wash your hands afterwards, even if you wore gloves. You might want to consider placing a small bathroom mat or litter tray mat at the front of your cat's litter tray to reduce tracking.

Be mindful that if your cat is indoor/outdoor or lives in a multi-cat household, the risk of contracting intestinal parasites (and coming into contact with another cat's faeces) is greater. Always be vigilant with cleaning and disposing of faecal matter.

The only way to confirm whether your cat has or hasn't contracted intestinal parasites is to collect a faecal sample for your veterinarian to run a faecal test/float. Some of the common intestinal parasites in cats include:

- **Giardia** (a microscopic parasite, commonly found in unsafe waterways or unsanitary conditions)
- **Campylobacter** (a bacteria that can cause infection/gastrointestinal disease from contaminated food or water)
- **Coccidia** (protozoan parasite that live in the cell walls of the cat's intestine. Immature coccidia (oocysts) are passed through faeces and contracted via faecal-oral transmission)

- ***Cryptosporidium*** (protozoan parasite; oocysts are spread via faecal contamination of food or water)
- ***Tritrichomonas*** (protozoan parasite that can colonise and infect a cat's large intestine; faecal-oral transmission most prevalent)

The good news is that intestinal parasites can be easily resolved with a treatment plan from your cat's veterinarian. Your veterinarian might also advise your cat to be on a bland diet for the duration of the treatment, due to the gastrointestinal sensitivities. After your cat's treatment has finished, another faecal test may be done to confirm that your cat no longer has the intestinal parasite/s.

It is important that if you suspect your cat has an intestinal parasite you speak to your vet immediately and avoid searching Google for answers as extended periods of vomiting and/or diarrhoea can be very serious, even fatal.

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