



**Good Friends
Animal
Hospital**

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What Can I Catch From My Pet?

We love our pets and hug and cuddle them, but can we catch a disease or parasite from them? It is not common but it can happen. Fortunately, in most cases, it can be prevented with a few precautions.

Roundworms and hookworms are common parasites that can infect humans. Roundworm eggs are passed out in the stool and humans become infected when they accidentally swallow the eggs. This is more common in young children. Roundworms can cause serious problems in people so all puppies and kittens should be treated several times and all pets should have a stool sample examined at least once a year. Hookworm eggs hatch into larvae that can penetrate your skin. People who work outside or have a lot of contact with soil are more at risk. The skin problem can be irritating but is usually not serious.

Giardia is a protozoan parasite that can cause severe diarrhea in pets and people. It is passed out in the stool so careful cleanup is important. Have your pet's stool examined regularly.

Toxoplasmosis is a protozoan parasite in cats that can cause health problems in people, especially unborn babies. Pregnant women should not clean the litter box and don't feed raw meat to your cat or allow it to hunt outside. Use caution when working in soil or sand that might have been used by cats and wash your hands well.

Pets will frequently get tapeworms from eating fleas or rabbits outside. You cannot get tapeworms from your pet directly – only if you also eat a flea! Our pets also don't have pinworms. Human pinworms you only get from other people.

Ringworm is a fungal infection of the skin that tends to cause itchiness, dry skin and hair loss. Some cats can be carriers who will pass along the infection but don't have lesions themselves.

Scabies is caused by a mite that lives under the skin and causes intense itching. It is not easy to identify so your itchy pet may be treated for scabies "just in case".

People can protect themselves by having their pets examined at least once a year and whenever they develop skin problems or diarrhea. Have a stool sample examined at least once a year and after any treatment for parasites. Clean up stool promptly and wash your hands. Cover sandboxes outside and wash your hands after working in soil. Keep toddlers and young children from putting non-food items in their mouths.

If anyone in the household is immune impaired you need to take extra precautions. You may need to have your pet examined more frequently and immediately if any illness is detected. Don't handle your pet if it has diarrhea, coughing or any sores.