

Toxocariasis

Fact Sheet

What is toxocariasis?

- Toxocariasis is an infection that can cause serious illness, including organ damage and eye disease.

Who can get toxocariasis?

Anyone. However, some people are at higher risk of infection, including:

- Children
- People who accidentally eat dirt
- Dog or cat owners

How does someone get toxocariasis?

- Dogs and cats infected with *Toxocara* shed *Toxocara* eggs in their feces
- People become infected by accidentally swallowing dirt that has been contaminated with dog or cat feces that contain *Toxocara* eggs
- Although it is rare, people can become infected from eating undercooked meat containing *Toxocara* larvae
- The disease is not spread by person-to-person contact like a cold or the flu

What are the symptoms?

- Many people do not have symptoms and do not ever get sick
- Some people (usually children) may get sick from the infection, and may have:
 - Fever along with damage to organs in their body, problems breathing, or stomach pain
 - Eye disease that causes vision problems, eye pain, or eye redness

Toxocariasis is a parasitic disease in people caused by infection with a roundworm found in dogs or cats.

What do I do if I think my child or I might have toxocariasis?

- You should see a healthcare provider who will examine you or your child. Your provider may take a sample of your blood for testing.

How do I prevent toxocariasis?

- Teach your kids to wash their hands after playing and not to eat dirt
- Cover sandboxes and restrict animal access to play areas
- Dispose of dog and cat feces promptly and wash your hands after handling pet waste
- Take your pets to the veterinarian to prevent infection with *Toxocara*. Your veterinarian can recommend a testing and treatment plan for deworming

For more information, please visit the toxocariasis website at www.cdc.gov/parasites/toxocariasis or contact the Parasitic Diseases Branch Public Inquiries desk at 404-718-4745, or parasites@cdc.gov.

