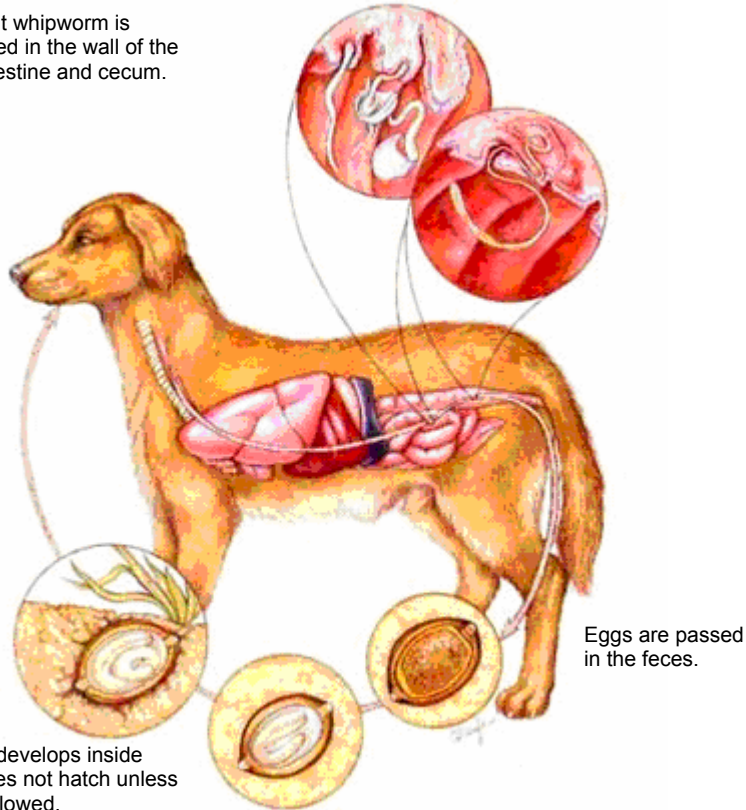




The adult whipworm is embedded in the wall of the large intestine and cecum.



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

Eggs are passed in the feces.

## Whipworms

### 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

Your pet has whipworms. Whipworms are parasites found in the colon and the cecum – a structure similar to the human appendix. Whipworm infection is a common cause of inflammation of the colon in dogs. Signs of infection include chronic diarrhea, anemia, and weight loss. This client education sheet will help you learn more about whipworms and will review your veterinarian's instructions for your pet's care at home, as well as follow-up with the veterinary health care team.

## What You Should Know About Whipworms

Adult whipworms are white and two to three inches long. They live in the colon and cecum. These worms have a slender end and a thick end, so they 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 clinical signs.

One adult female whipworm may lay 2,000 or more eggs a day. These eggs are carried outside the pet's body with the stool, contaminating kennels and yards. Under optimal conditions of humidity and temperature, immature whipworms called larvae develop within the eggs. Pets acquire whipworms when they ingest soil contaminated with eggs containing infective larvae. These 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. Oftentimes, several stool specimens must be collected over a period of several days and examined 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 reveal anemia.

Examining the colon and cecum with an instrument called an endoscope may help your veterinarian diagnose whipworms.

## Treatment and Home Care

Whipworm infections are treated with dewormers; however, three or more treatments may be necessary because of the parasite's life cycle. Diarrhea may be 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 given to determine the effectiveness of the treatment. Stool specimens should also be checked at regular intervals as suggested by your veterinarian. This will enable your veterinarian to diagnose reinfections if they occur.

Control of reinfections is difficult because whipworm eggs are among the most resistant eggs known to veterinarians. Daily removal of feces (and whipworm eggs before they become infective) from the kennel or 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 anemic 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 p/d®.

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 feeding excess 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 Diet® 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 is one of the few that doesn't readily accept a new food, try warming the canned food to body temperature, hand feeding for the first few days, or mixing the dry food with warm water (wait ten minutes before serving). However, do not add water to your cat's food. Feed only the recommended food. Be patient but firm with your pet.

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*Presented as an educational service by*

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### Home Care Instructions

Client's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Patient's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Medication(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Nutritional Recommendation: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-Up Appointment: \_\_\_\_\_

(Hospital Stamp Area Above)

REGULAR VISITS WILL HELP OUR VETERINARY HEALTH CARE TEAM PROVIDE FOR YOUR PET'S BEST INTEREST.