



Hookworms

Diagnostic Plan

History
Physical examination
Stool analysis
Blood work

Therapeutic Plan

Dewormers
Blood transfusions
Supportive therapy

Nutritional Plan

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

Hookworms

Your pet has hookworms. Hookworms are relatively common blood-sucking parasites that live in the small intestines. They can cause diarrhea and life-threatening anemia. Hookworm infections are treated with dewormers and supportive therapy, including blood transfusions. This client education sheet will help you learn more about hookworms 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 Hookworms

Hookworms are tiny white to reddish-brown parasites that live in the small intestine. They puncture the intestinal lining and feed on blood. Adult females deposit large numbers of eggs in the intestine. These eggs are then carried out of the pet's body with the stool. Under favorable conditions, the eggs hatch and release immature hookworms called larvae. Larvae migrate to the soil surface or to the tops of blades of grass where they wait for a suitable host. Larvae are either eaten by pets or penetrate the animal's skin, usually between the toes. Larvae complete the life cycle by maturing to the adult stage in the small intestine. Puppies and kittens can also become infected by hookworm larvae that are in their mother's milk.

Though uncommon, human infections with hookworms have also been reported in areas where the soil is heavily contaminated. Hookworm larvae penetrate the skin between people's toes, causing a disease called cutaneous larval migrans. Usually this disease occurs in children who walk barefoot in contaminated areas.

Diagnosis

Microscopic examination of a pet's stool by your veterinarian may disclose the presence of hookworm eggs. Blood tests may reveal anemia. Because hookworms begin feeding before they become sexually mature, puppies may become anemic before hookworm eggs appear in the stool.

Treatment and Home Care

Debilitated dogs and cats require treatment for the anemia caused by hookworms. Treatment may include blood transfusions, iron supplementation or both. Intestinal protectants and medications to relieve intestinal spasms are sometimes needed.

Dewormers effectively eliminate hookworms from the intestinal tract. Many veterinarians recommend that a stool sample be evaluated by microscopic examination one week after the last deworming to make sure the treatment was effective.

In regions where hookworms are common, pets may need to be confined to areas where sanitation can be practiced to reduce the chances for reinfection. Feces should be removed from these areas daily, and pet shouldn't be allowed access to areas where free-roaming animals have bowel movements. Feces should be removed from litter pans daily. Litter pans should be washed routinely and allowed to dry in direct sunlight.

Regular microscopic examination of your pet's stool is the best method to ensure that your pet has not been reinfected with hookworms. Your veterinarian will tell you how often your pet's stool should be examined. The frequency will depend on your geographic location.

Nutritional Plan

If your pet has a hookworm infection, your veterinarian may suggest a dietary change based on your pet's age and body condition, the degree of diarrhea and anemia and the presence or absence of disease in other organs and body systems. If your pet has signs of severe parasitism, your veterinarian may give you special feeding instructions. Anemic and diarrheic patients may benefit from foods with increased levels of protein and energy during the recovery process. Such foods include Hill's® Prescription Diet® i/d® Canine and i/d® Feline Gastrointestinal Health.

After your pet's recovery is complete, your veterinarian may recommend another dietary change. Nutrition is especially important for optimal growth and proper development of the protective immune system in puppies and kittens. Optimal nutrition should also reduce the health risks associated with feeding excess levels of nutrients such as calcium and phosphorus, which could cause skeletal problems, and excess calories, which could cause obesity. Foods formulated for optimal growth that avoid excess levels of harmful nutrients include Hill's® Science Diet® brand pet foods.

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). Feed only the recommended food. Be patient but firm with your pet. This is important because the success or failure of treatment depends to a large degree on strict adherence to the new food.

Presented as an educational service by



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.