



Heartworms, Parasites, and People

Heartworms are worms that grow up to a foot long and reside in the heart, lungs, and associated blood vessels of affected pets. They are transmitted via the bite of an infected mosquito (which means your strictly-indoor dogs can become affected as well). This is a potentially fatal condition and, if left untreated, dogs can die of heartworms.

There is prevention medication for heartworms and it will need to be regularly administered to your dog for the entirety of his or her life. This prescription medication can be given monthly or as an injection through your veterinarian. You should determine the best option by talking with your veterinarian. If your dog is over 6 months of age, he or she needs to be tested before receiving the medication. All dogs should be retested every year with routine checkups, vaccinations, and parasite exams.

Dogs can also have intestinal parasites. Some of these, such as hookworms and roundworms, can cause problems in people. The risk is higher for children, the elderly, and those with weak or compromised immune systems. Hookworms and roundworms can be prevented— and therefore your family protected— by regularly treating your dog with heartworm prevention medication as it also prevents these parasites.

We recommend that you begin your relationship with your personal veterinarian by sharing the medical history of your new dog and continuing heartworm prevention medication through your personal veterinarian. Remember that you will need to visit your veterinarian each year for your pets' annual checkup, vaccinations, and parasite check.

If your dog tested positive for heartworms, you should speak with your regular veterinarian to learn about your options for treatment. As with most conditions, the earlier it is detected, the better the chances your dog will recover. Please visit <https://www.heartwormsociety.org/> to learn more about keeping your pets safe from heartworms.