

Cryptosporidiosis in Cats

Overview

Cryptosporidia are nasty little protozoan parasites that affect not just cats but dogs, rodents, calves, and humans, as well. These little buggers are very infectious and affect your cat's gastrointestinal tract, sometimes causing symptoms such as [diarrhea](#). This bug is spread through infected feces, which can contaminate water sources or the environment. Cats that ingest the contaminated feces can become infected.

Cryptosporidiosis usually occurs in kittens younger than 6 months of age. Cats with healthy immune systems usually recover quickly and never show signs of infection, or have only mild diarrhea. However, this disease can be life-threatening for cats with severely compromised immune systems.

Symptoms

As mentioned, cats with healthy immune systems often have no symptoms at all. If your cat is symptomatic, you may notice diarrhea, [fever](#), and a lack of interest in food.

Diagnosis/Treatment

If your veterinarian suspects cryptosporidiosis, she or he may suggest the following:

- A thorough physical exam
- Chemistry tests to evaluate kidney, liver, and pancreatic function, as well as sugar levels
- Serologic tests to identify if your pet has been exposed to other infectious disease
- A complete blood count to rule out certain blood-related conditions
- Electrolyte tests to ensure your pet isn't dehydrated or suffering from an electrolyte imbalance
- Urine tests to screen for urinary tract infection and other disease
- A fecal exam to rule out intestinal worms, bacteria, and other gastrointestinal parasitic infections
- Serology tests to identify antibodies against the parasite
- PCR testing
- An intestinal biopsy to rule out other underlying disease, such as [inflammatory bowel disease \(IBD\)](#) or cancer

In many cases, asymptomatic cats recover from cryptosporidiosis on their own. If your pet needs treatment, your veterinarian may prescribe an antibiotic and a prescription diet to help control the diarrhea. In severe cases, additional supportive care, such as fluid-replacement therapy to alleviate the dehydration caused by diarrhea, may also be required.

Prevention

The best way to prevent a cryptosporidiosis infection is to provide your pet with clean drinking water and a clean environment, and to keep her strictly indoors!

If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian – they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of your pets.