

# Tapeworm Infection in Cats

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## Overview

It is totally disgusting to think that, in the early 1900s, it was vogue to consume tapeworms as an easy means of weight loss. This same type of tapeworm can sometimes live in your cat's small intestine, feeding off the food she eats as it makes its way through her digestive system.

So, what exactly is a tapeworm? Tapeworms get their name from the fact that they look like—you guessed it—tape. The body of the tapeworm is segmented up to its neck. Its mouth is filled with six sets of "teeth" that the parasite uses to attach itself to the intestinal lining. Once it's attached, it moves in permanently and starts stealing its meals from your kitty.

How does a cat get tapeworms?

So here is where tapeworms get even freakier. Tapeworms are usually transmitted when a cat digests a flea during grooming. Cats can also get tapeworms by ingesting the eggs shed by other animals or by hunting flea-infested rodents. As mentioned, a tapeworm's body is made up of tiny segments. Each of these segments has its own digestive and reproductive system. These segments eventually break off and are passed through your cat's digestive system, exiting via the anus.

These nasty segments, which look like pieces of rice, are spread around the house and can be found in the cat's litter box, and in your furniture and carpeting. When a segment is ingested by a host, the cycle can start all over again inside the unknowing victim's digestive tract.

## Symptoms

The most common symptom of tapeworms is the appearance of the tapeworm segments on your cat's fur, near her anus, or in her stool. Because tapeworms feed on the nutrients passed in the small intestine, your cat may seem more hungry than usual as she is unwittingly sharing her meals with a nasty intestinal parasite. If the infestation lasts long enough, your cat might even lose weight.

## Diagnosis/Treatment

The easiest and most common way to diagnose

tapeworms is through visual inspection. Your veterinarian may also recommend other diagnostic tests, depending on your kitty's symptoms; these could include a fecal test to rule out other intestinal parasites.

Treating tapeworms includes a deworming medication that will kill off the existing tapeworms. Additionally, ensuring your cat and house are flea-free is as important, since your cat can become reinfested by consuming fleas.

## Prevention

Prevention of tapeworms includes keeping your cat's litter pan and bedding clean and your cat and house free of fleas. Use proper flea control, as recommended by your veterinarian, for the environment you live in. If your cat is a hunter, check her often as rodents are often hosts to [fleas](#), which in turn are hosts to tapeworms!

*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.*