

I like to take my dog hiking and camping with me and I've heard of something called Giardia, what is it?

Giardia is an intestinal disease of people, dogs, cats and other animals. It is caused by a protozoal microorganism which is swallowed when the animal eats contaminated stool, food or water. Once an animal is infected it passes infective cysts into its stool and the cycle continues. Signs include varying severity of diarrhea. Giardia prevents the proper absorption of nutrients and damages the intestinal lining. Even animals without diarrhea can be carrier of the disease so diagnosis can be difficult. Repeated stool samples to identify the microorganism may be needed. Once diagnosed, your pet can be treated with medication. Since this disease can be transmitted to people, always practice proper hygiene when handling your pets stool and environment.

Exposure to sun and drying as well as bleach solutions are helpful in killing the infective cysts.