



## New CDC study results show *Toxocara* infection more common than previously thought

Almost 14% of the U.S. population is infected with *Toxocara*, a parasite of dogs and cats that can be passed from animals to humans. The results of the study that looked at a representative sample of the U.S. population show that *Toxocara* infection is more widespread and common than previously understood.

The results of the study were presented November 5, 2007 at the annual meeting of the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene in Philadelphia.\*

Although most persons infected with *Toxocara* have no symptoms, the parasite is capable of causing blindness and other systemic illness. The CDC study shows transmission of *Toxocara* is most common in young children and youth under age 20. Non-Hispanic Blacks have the infection more than Mexican Americans and non-Hispanic Whites of all age groups. All children are more likely to be infected as children tend to play in and sometimes eat contaminated soil. Dog ownership was associated with infection.

Prevention measures include

- keep the dog or cat – especially puppies and kittens -under a veterinarian's care for early and regular deworming
- clean up after the pet and dispose of stool
- keep animals' play area clean
- wash hands after playing with dogs or cats
- keep children from playing in areas where animals have soiled
- cover sandboxes to keep out animals
- don't let children eat dirt.

\*Won K, Kruszon-Moran D, Schantz P, Jones J. National seroprevalence and risk factors for zoonotic *Toxocara* spp. infection. In: Abstracts of the 56<sup>th</sup> American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; 2007 Nov 4-8.

