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# Heartworm Disease

Heartworm disease is a serious and potentially fatal disease. It is caused by foot-long worms (heartworms) that live in the heart, lungs, and associated blood vessels of affected pets. It can cause severe lung disease, heart failure and damage to other organs in the body.

## Is it preventable?

Yes! One pill, every 30 days will prevent heartworms and many other types of worms in your pets. One year of heartworm prevention is still less than treating your pet for heartworms, even once.



MCHA offers this medication.

Check out details at [www.monroehumane.org/minor-medical-clinics](http://www.monroehumane.org/minor-medical-clinics)

## Is it treatable?

If you catch the disease early enough, and with assistance from a full-service veterinary clinic, the disease can be treated. It can cost at least \$500-\$1,000 to treat your pet for heartworms. Treatment can take up to six months. Symptoms can include a mild persistent cough, reluctance to exercise, fatigue after moderate activity, decreased appetite, and weight loss. Your pet should be screened annually for heartworms before beginning heartworm prevention. Screening can be done with a simple blood test, usually less than \$30.

## Is it fatal?

Without early diagnosis and treatment, yes the disease can be fatal. Heartworm disease is very complex and can affect many vital organs, including the heart, lungs, kidneys, and liver. Heartworms are "foot-long" parasites and the damage that they cause can be severe.

When a mosquito bites and takes a blood meal from an infected animal, it picks up these baby worms.



Then, when the infected mosquito bites another dog, cat, or susceptible wild animal, the infective larvae are deposited onto the surface of the animal's skin and enter the new host through the mosquito's bite wound.

