

**K.C. CAT CLINIC**  
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## WHY ALL CATS SHOULD BE ON HEARTWORM PREVENTATIVE

New research has shown that there is a lot more heartworm disease in cats than previously thought. It is no longer considered a rare diagnosis. We now believe that many cats that are coughing and were previously diagnosed with feline asthma, are in reality coughing because of heartworm disease. Vomiting is also associated with this parasite. There is a lot of heartworm disease in dogs in Kansas City and cats in our area are considered at risk for this disease as well. We want to be sure that all cat owners know that they should be using a heartworm preventative on their cat.

Mosquitoes transmit heartworms. They inject baby heartworms called larvae. The larvae grow once inside the animal's body and can cause different diseases depending on that animal's response to the worm as it matures. We think that the baby worms cause the lion's share of the disease. The lungs of the cat are exquisitely sensitive to the presence of the larvae. The lungs don't like them and can set up an intense immune response around the little lower airways that acts like asthma. The symptoms of heartworm disease can be coughing, vomiting, and difficulty breathing. Much less frequent, but more immediately life threatening, is the disease caused by the adult worm. Adult worms live in the heart. The worms cause lots of irritation in the major vessels near the heart. Unfortunately, in some cats the first sign of heartworm disease is sudden death from a pulmonary embolism. Lots of other things can cause these signs as well, so we will be testing for them as well as the heartworms. If we determine that a cat has heartworms, treatment is started to decrease the irritation in the vessels and lungs. There are tons of coughing cats. Using one of the heartworm preventatives can greatly decrease your cat's risk of developing problems from this disease. We might even see a decrease in the number of vomiting cats.

It is likely that your cat will be exposed to mosquitoes and we suggest a heartworm preventative for all cats. It doesn't make a difference if your cat is only inside. Mosquitoes are readily found inside our homes. Several monthly preventative medications are available. Your cat's lifestyle and product cost will be considerations when you choose a product. Advantage Multi is a good flea product that is also effective against heartworms and several other parasites. Revolution is another, but it may not be quite so good on adult fleas as Advantage. There are also two monthly oral products, neither of which provides flea control. Interceptor is a good heartworm preventative and also works on some of the same intestinal parasites as the "spot on" products. Heartguard is the other oral product and it only works against heartworms. Choose a product and use it. Your cat will thank you.