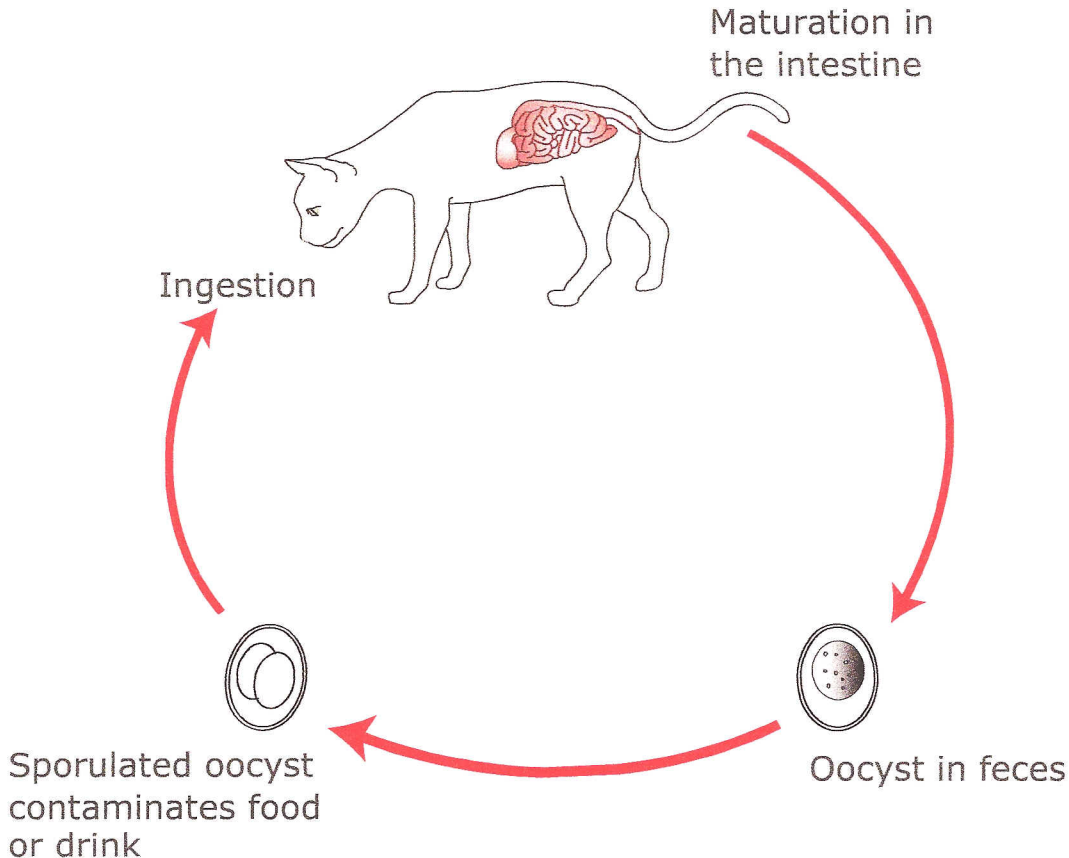


Coccidia Life Cycle - Cat: Coccidiosis in the cat.



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Coccidiosis is an intestinal tract infection caused by a protozoal parasite. These microscopic parasites live within the cells lining the intestinal wall of their host. Oocysts or immature coccidia are passed in the environment in fecal material. The oocysts mature or sporulate to an infective stage. If sporulated oocysts are swallowed, they mature within the intestines and complete their life cycle. Sporulation can occur in less than a day under ideal conditions, but usually takes about a week. In healthy adult cats, coccidiosis is an insignificant disease; in kittens and sick adult cats, an infection can cause severe diarrhea and dehydration. Sporulated oocysts are not species specific, and can infect other mammals such as mice and dogs. Most of the common species of coccidia found in cats do not infect humans. However, *Cryptosporidium* may pose a health risk to immunosuppressed adult humans. For further details about these parasites, see our Client Education Handout Series.