

THAT'S Amazing!
Video Inquiry
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PREMIUM CONTENT
 Cotton Ball Bats

Parasitism

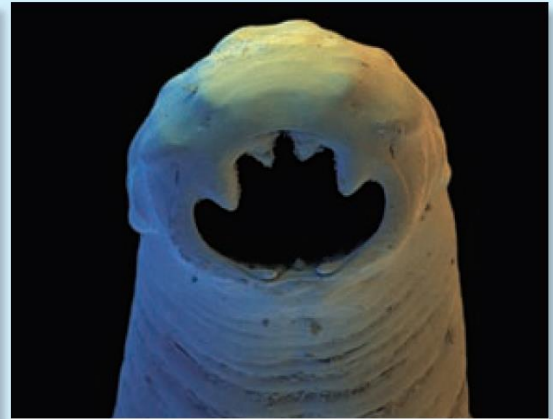
Parasitism is a symbiotic relationship involving a species that directly harms its host. **Parasitism** is a relationship similar to predation in that one organism benefits while the other is harmed. But unlike a predator, which quickly kills and eats its prey, a parasite benefits by keeping its host alive for days or years. For example, the braconid wasp lays its eggs inside a caterpillar. When the larvae hatch, they eat the caterpillar from the inside out, consuming the nutrients they need to grow into adults.

FIGURE 2.3 Human Parasites: Inside and Out

Humans can get parasites in many ways. Leeches attach to the exposed skin of humans. By penetrating human skin, hookworms find their home in the digestive tract.



Many leeches feed on the blood of a host organism. Freshwater leeches such as this one can grow to lengths of 12 cm or more.



Hookworms are endoparasites with sharp teeth that attach to the intestinal wall of a host organism and absorb nutrients for food. (colored SEM; magnification 200×)

CONNECT TO

INVERTEBRATES

Leeches and hookworms are classified as invertebrates. In **Invertebrate Diversity**, you will learn more about invertebrate diversity.

The needs of a parasite are met by a host—the victim of the parasite. There are two different ways that parasites can use their host. An ectoparasite makes its home on the exterior of an organism, attaching itself to the outside of the host and usually feeding on its fluids. Common ectoparasites include fleas, ticks, and leeches, such as the one seen in **FIGURE 2.3**. Many types of ectoparasites are also known to carry a wide variety of diseases that can affect their host. Parasites can also be found inside of living organisms. Endoparasites live in the tissues and organs of a host where, safely hidden, they feed on the nutrients ingested by their host. Large endoparasites, such as tapeworms and hookworms, and smaller protozoan endoparasites can kill their host if not treated.

Connect What type of symbiosis is the relationship between a dog and its owner?