

Nematode

Although they are generally tiny creatures, if all the world's nematodes were joined end to end, they'd stretch right around the equator!

What they look like

Nematodes are elongated, thin worms without any segments and are usually see-through. They are round in cross-section (cut across) throughout the length of their body, which is why they are also called roundworms. Their body is generally blunt, tapered, or uniformly threadlike. The mouth at one end has three or six lips with the anus at the other end. The sexes are separate but males are rare or unknown in many species. Many, but not all nematodes move with a characteristic whip-like motion.

Where they live

Nematodes live in soft sediment (matter deposited at the bottom of the water) that they burrow into. They can also live anywhere there's enough moisture. Some are parasitic and live within a plant or animal. They live in warm and moist conditions that favour the development of eggs and infection of hosts.

What they eat

Nematodes can live on bacteria, fungi and plants. Some nematodes types are parasitic, living within plants or animals. In animals, they suck blood and tissue.

Pollution tolerance Tolerant, rating 3

Nematodes can live in a wide range of environments and are tolerant to salt and different water temperatures.

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Pollution tolerance	Very sensitive	Sensitive	Tolerant	Very tolerant
Size	Up to 10 mm long			

What's interesting about Nematodes?

- Nematodes can stop all their life activities and go to sleep when conditions are unfavourable. In this resistant state, they can survive extreme dry heat or cold, and return to life when conditions become favourable.
- One species of Nematode is a parasite of the Sperm Whale and grows up to 13 metres long.
- Some Nematodes in tropical regions can cause diseases in humans, such as elephantiasis, which causes parts of the body to swell.

Where they fit in

Phylum Nematoda >

