

Diarrhoea in Dogs

Overview

- There are many different things that can cause diarrhoea in dogs.
- Most mild cases resolve within 24 hours, but some are more serious and need veterinary attention.
- If your dog has been experiencing mild diarrhoea for less than 24 hours, you may want to try settling them at home before contacting your vet, but if they seem unwell, or have had symptoms for more than 24 hours, it's always best to contact your vet for advice.

Causes of diarrhoea in dogs



There are many different things that can cause diarrhoea in dogs. Follow the links below for more information about some of the most common causes:

Food related:

- [Eating something they shouldn't have](#) – if your dog eats something that they aren't used to, they may experience diarrhoea and/or [vomiting](#).
- [Food allergy](#) – if your dog is allergic to something in their food they are likely to suffer with chronic diarrhoea and/or skin problems.
- [After a change in food](#) – a sudden change in food very often causes soft stools or diarrhoea.

Infections:

- [Parvovirus](#) – a potentially deadly virus that causes severe diarrhoea and vomiting.
- [Worms](#) – worms can damage the gut lining and cause diarrhoea (and in severe cases, vomiting).
- [Giardia](#) – a small parasite that attacks the gut lining causing severe, watery diarrhoea.
- Bacterial gut infections – for example Salmonella or Campylobacter, which often cause severe, bloody diarrhoea.

Other:

- [Haemorrhagic gastroenteritis \(HGE\)](#) – a nasty condition that causes severe vomiting and bloody diarrhoea.
- [Colitis](#) – inflammation of the large intestine, which causes soft stools/diarrhoea containing fresh blood and mucus.
- [Gut blockage \(foreign body\)](#) – if your dog has a gut blockage they are likely to develop diarrhoea and vomiting, as well as other symptoms such as a painful abdomen.
- Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) – chronic inflammation of the intestines which causes ongoing diarrhoea.
- [Pancreatitis](#) – inflammation of the pancreas (an organ that helps with digestion), which causes diarrhoea, vomiting and severe pain in the front of the abdomen.
- [Liver disease](#) – problems with the liver often cause diarrhoea along with other symptoms such as weight loss, low energy, vomiting, and jaundice.
- Exocrine Pancreatic Insufficiency (EPI) – a condition which stops the body digesting its food properly. Dogs with EPI tend to pass large volumes of foul smelling, pale, oily stools.

When should I contact my vet about my dog's diarrhoea?



If your dog has had mild diarrhoea for less than 24 hours, and seems otherwise well, you may want to try [settling their stomach at home](#) before contacting your vet. However, you should always contact your vet for advice if your dog has diarrhoea and is also:

- Very young or elderly
- Otherwise unwell
- Taking other medications such as [anti-inflammatory drugs \(NSAIDs\)](#)

...or has more severe symptoms such as:

- [Blood and/or mucus in their diarrhoea](#)
- Severe or constant watery diarrhoea
- [Reduced appetite \(eating less\)](#)
- [Vomiting](#) as well as diarrhoea
- [Lethargy \(low energy\)](#)
- A painful stomach – dogs with a painful stomach will often yelp when they are picked up, or stand in a 'prayer position' with their front legs on the floor and hind legs stood up.

The same applies for dogs producing soft stools but not diarrhoea [→](#), if it has been ongoing for more than 24 hours, contact your vet for advice.

You know your dog best – if you're concerned it's always best to contact your vet.

[Find out more about PDSA's veterinary services](#)

Homecare for diarrhoea in dogs

This guide is for dogs that have had diarrhoea for less than 24 hours, and are otherwise well in themselves. Do not follow this guide (contact your vet instead) if your dog seems unwell in themselves, or has any of the [more severe symptoms listed above](#).

Plenty of water

Make sure your dog has access to plenty of water and that they are drinking regularly – dogs with diarrhoea often need to drink a bit more to replace the extra fluid they lose in their poo.

24 hours fasting

Withholding food for 24 hours might help speed up your dog's recovery from diarrhoea. However, you need to make sure they always have access to water, and never fast a young puppy, an elderly dog, or a dog with other illnesses.

Small, frequent, bland meals

After their 24 hour fast, you can start feeding your dog a bland diet, little and often throughout the day – this will gently get their guts used to processing food again. You can either cook a bland diet at home using plain white rice and boiled chicken breast (no skin or bones), or buy it tinned from your vet practice (specifically for dogs that have had an upset stomach). Once your dog is passing solid poo, you can then slowly reintroduce their normal food over a few days (don't continue a homemade diet for more than a few days without consulting your vet). Don't be tempted to give your dog anything rich or fatty until they have fully recovered, because this is likely to make their diarrhoea much worse!

Rest

It's important to let your dog rest and avoid any energetic activities until they have completely recovered from their diarrhoea.

Probiotics

Probiotics are friendly bacteria for the gut that can be beneficial for some dogs with diarrhoea (but not all). They are thought to work by topping up natural, healthy gut bacteria and binding any nasty ones. Probiotics can be bought at your vets or online.





Will my dog need antibiotics?

[Antibiotics](#) aren't often necessary for diarrhoea. This is because they only help treat bacterial infections, and most cases of diarrhoea are not caused by bacteria. In some circumstances, antibiotics can even make the problem worse by wiping out natural, helpful gut bacteria. Instead of antibiotics, your vet may suggest alternative treatments such as [probiotics](#).

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