

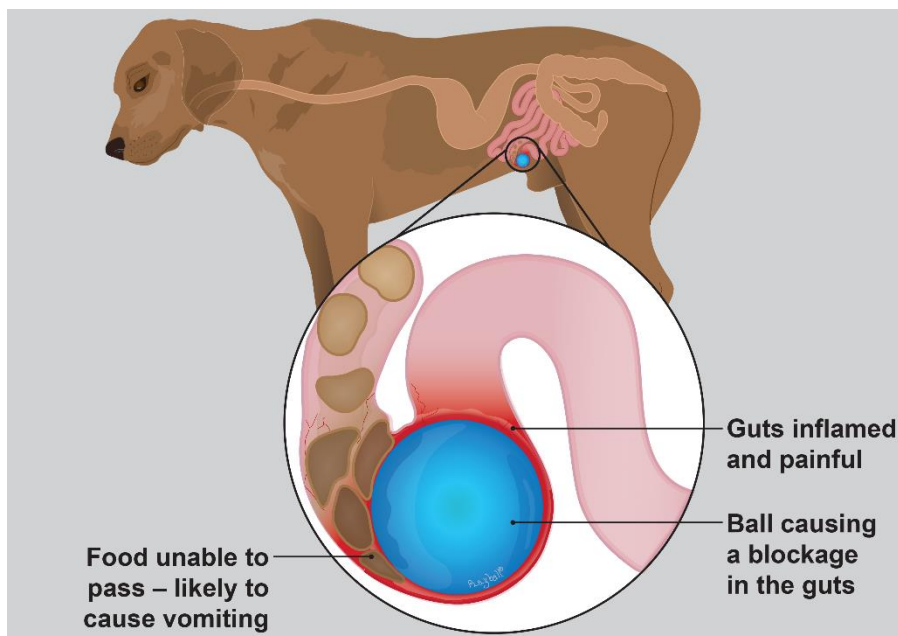
Gut blockages in dogs

Overview

Dogs are very curious and eat some extremely strange things - rubber toys, stones, socks, bones, knives and forks – the list is endless! Unfortunately, some of these items get lodged in their guts and cause a blockage.

Gut blockage is a very serious, painful condition that can kill a dog if it's not treated quickly. If your dog swallows something that gets stuck inside them, it is likely that they will need an emergency operation to remove it.

Contact your vet immediately if you think your dog has eaten something they shouldn't have.



Gut blockage caused by a ball

Signs of a gut blockage

Common signs of a gut blockage include:

- Vomiting (being sick) – this can range from being violently sick to just being sick every now and then
- A painful tummy – yelping or growling when you touch their tummy or sitting in a “prayer position” with their front legs on the floor and their bum in the air
- Diarrhoea (soft or runny poo)
- Not being able to poo (constipation)
- Being weak, wobbly, quiet or sleeping more than usual
- Less or no interest in food
- Weight loss

Causes of gut blockages

PDSA vets see over 2,700 pets a year that have eaten something they shouldn't have. Dogs swallow the strangest things, some of the most common are listed below:

- Bones
- Corn on the cob
- Socks
- Underwear
- Children's toys
- Dummies / teats
- Bouncy balls

Treatment

If your dog has very recently swallowed something that could cause a blockage, your vet might decide to give them an injection to make them sick in an attempt to try and bring the item back up before it enters the guts. Whether your vet decides to do this or not depends on the object they have swallowed - it is not always safe.

If your vet thinks there might be something already blocking your dog's guts, it is likely they will admit them into the veterinary hospital for treatment.

Your vet may decide to do the following:

- X-rays – these can show some items stuck in your dog's guts.
- Scan (ultrasound) your dog's tummy – this can show items stuck in your dog's guts.
- Perform an emergency operation to remove the blockage.
- Put your dog on a drip and give other medications (pain relief and antibiotics) before surgery and / or while they recover.

Your dog may need to stay in the veterinary hospital for a few days while they recover.

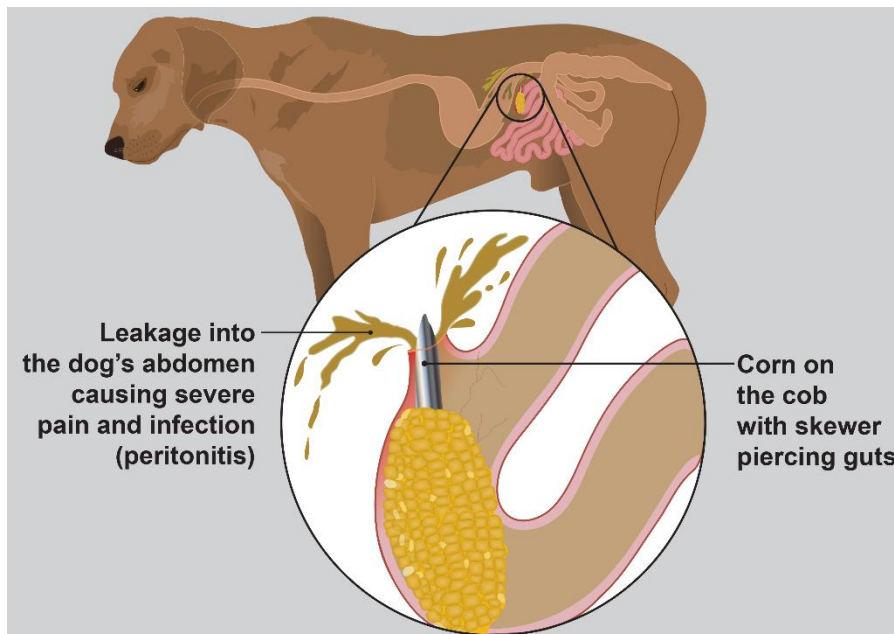
Will my dog be ok?

If your dog eats something that might harm them, take them to the vets ASAP – they will have a much better chance of getting better if they are seen quickly.

Having a gut blockage is a dangerous condition, complications during and after surgery are quite common.

The item they've eaten could damage guts as well as block them, for example something sharp or spiky might puncture or tear their guts (see image below). However, if your dog is treated by a vet quickly and there aren't any complications during surgery there is a good chance they will bounce back and recover very well.

If your dog does get complications after the surgery, these can sometimes be treated but your dog may require intensive care.



Gut blockages can lead to gut puncture

When to contact your vet

Contact your vet immediately for an emergency appointment if your dog is showing any of the signs above or has eaten something that could block their guts.

Never wait to see if a problem develops - your dog could become very ill or even die without treatment.

You know your dog best. If they don't have the symptoms listed above but you are still concerned it's always best to contact your vet.

Is it safe to give bones to my dog?

No, never feed bones as treats.

Bones can easily damage teeth or block a dog's food pipe, tummy or guts. Rawhide chews can also cause major problems because if large pieces are swallowed they can become stuck. If you want to give your dog something to chew, choose a safe, indestructible toy to keep them entertained.

Prevention

It is often the same dogs we see back time and time again for eating things they shouldn't. Young dogs tend to be more at risk because they are keener to explore the world with their mouths.

Take a look at our website for our list of helpful tips to help prevent your dog from swallowing something they shouldn't.

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