

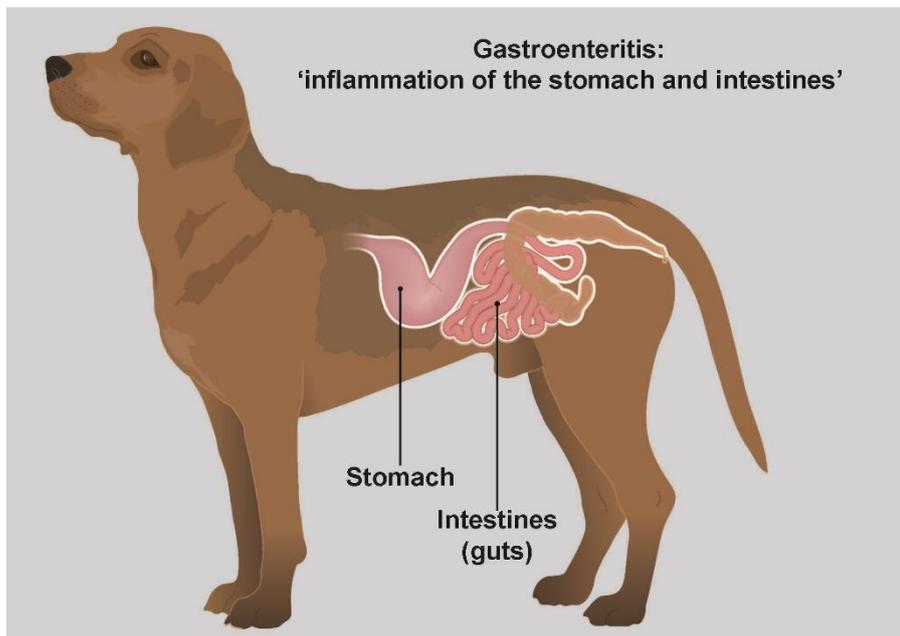
Gastroenteritis (stomach upset) in dogs

Overview

Gastroenteritis is a general term for a stomach and gut upsets with symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhoea and gut pain.

There are many possible causes, for example eating something unusual or perhaps a gut infection.

Treatment for gastroenteritis focuses on keeping your dog comfortable and hydrated whilst they recover.



What is gastroenteritis?

Gastroenteritis is a general term for irritation of the stomach and guts causes symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhoea, stomach pain, dehydration and a high temperature.

Gastroenteritis ranges from mild (lasts one to two days) to severe (lasts for more than two days, diarrhoea and/or vomit may contain blood, and they may become very poorly).

If your dog's diarrhoea or vomit contains blood we call the condition haemorrhagic gastroenteritis which is usually more serious.

Symptoms

- Diarrhoea
- Vomiting and retching
- Eating less or nothing at all
- Lethargy
- Painful abdomen – your dog may yelp or growl when they are picked up, when you touch near their tummy or they stand in a “praying position” with their front legs on the floor and hind legs stood up.

When to contact your vet

Contact your vet if your dog has any of the signs above or appears unwell. Most mild cases of gastroenteritis improve within one to two days, but if your dog has been vomiting or passing a lot of diarrhoea they may become poorly through dehydration.

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.

Causes

Possible causes of gastroenteritis in dogs include:

- Eating something they shouldn't have
- Diarrhoea after a sudden change in food
- Worms
- Other parasites such as Giardia
- Parvovirus
- Bacterial gut infections (which may be mild or severe)
- Gut blockage
- Food allergy
- Organ failure (e.g. kidney or liver failure)

Treatment

Your vet may recommend the following treatments:

Anti-sickness medication

- In some cases, anti-sickness medication may be given to stop your dog feeling sick and vomiting.
- Anti-sickness medication isn't always safe to use and your vet may decide against using it if they suspect something more serious such as a gut blockage.

A drip to give fluids

- Dogs with more serious symptoms may need to be admitted into the veterinary hospital for intensive care.
- A drip puts fluids directly into the bloodstream. This will rehydrate your dog and make them feel better.

Antibiotics

- Antibiotics aren't necessary in all cases. If the problem isn't caused by a bacteria, antibiotics can make things

worse by wiping out “friendly” gut bacteria that help to protect your dog.

- If your vet gives your dog antibiotics it’s important to follow the instructions and complete the course.

What if my dog doesn’t get better?

Most dogs will improve from gastroenteritis within a few days but if your dog isn’t improving or gets worse at any point, your vet may decide run some tests to check for other issues. These may include:

- A stool sample
- Blood tests
- X-rays
- Ultrasound scans

Prevention

Precautions to protect your dog from gastroenteritis include:

Vaccination

- You can vaccinate dogs against parvovirus, which is one of the causes of gastroenteritis. Vaccinate your dog regularly throughout their life.

Worming treatment

- Regularly deworm your dog.

Stop scavenging

- If your dog is a scavenger, make sure they don’t have access to anything they shouldn’t eat.

Home care for dogs with diarrhoea

Diarrhoea is a very common problem in dogs, fortunately it often passes within one to two days.

If your dog has diarrhoea (without blood or mucus) but is otherwise happy, well and behaving normally you could try to settle them at home. If they don't improve quickly or you are concerned about them at any point book an appointment with your vet.

Suggestions to settle your dog's stomach:

24 hours fasting

- If your dog isn't old, very young or poorly in themselves, fasting them for 24 hours can help speed up their recovery.

A bland diet

- An easy-to-digest diet can speed up recovery. Don't give your dog anything rich or fatty – this could make their diarrhoea much worse!
- Plain white rice or plain boiled chicken (without skin or bones) can be used in the very short term but bland diets are also available from your vet.

Smaller meals

- Feed your dog very small meals throughout the day. This will keep their guts moving without overwhelming them.

Plenty of water

- Dogs who are suffering from diarrhoea might need to drink a bit more than usual to replace the extra fluid they're losing in their poo. Make sure your dog has access to plenty of water and that they are drinking throughout the day. Speak to your vet if your dog stops drinking or is drinking much more than usual.

Rest

- Let your dog rest and recover and avoid anything energetic until they are feeling better. If they are very lethargic then you should speak to your vet.

Probiotics

- Probiotics are friendly bacteria for your dog's gut that can be beneficial for some dogs, but not all.
- Probiotics are thought to work by topping up the normal bacteria and binding nasty bacteria and toxins. Probiotics can be bought at your vets or online.



Gradually reintroduce their normal food

- Your dog should be back to normal after a couple of days. Once they're passing solid poo you can start to give them their normal food again, slowly over a few days.

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