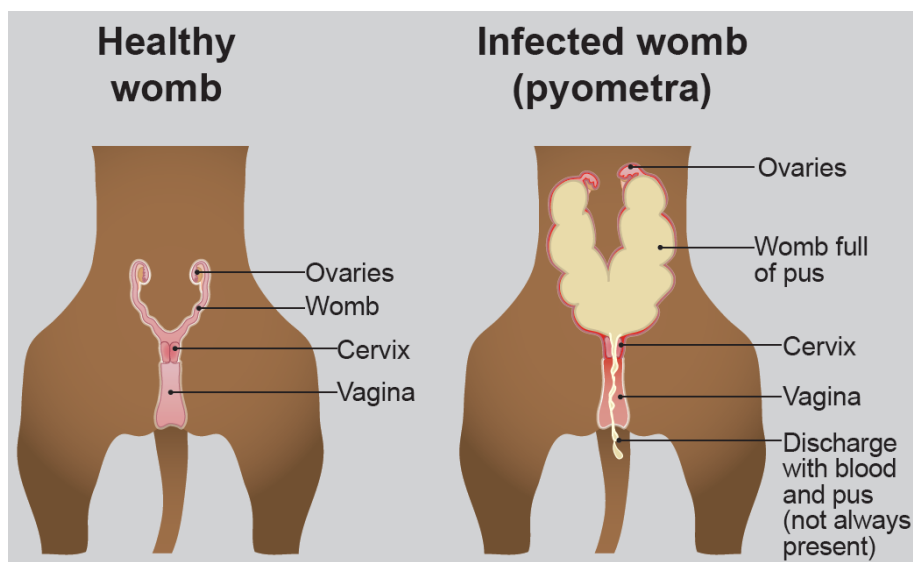


Pyometra (infected womb) in dogs

Overview

- A pyometra is a womb infection – a very serious condition, common in unneutered, female dogs.
- Treatment for a pyometra includes emergency surgery to remove the womb, a fluid drip and medication.
- The sooner a dog with a pyometra is treated, the better their chance of survival and recovery. Pyometra can cause death.
- The most common time for a pyometra to develop is four to eight weeks after a heat/season.
- Neutering your dog will prevent pyometra.
- **A pyometra is an emergency – contact your vet immediately for an emergency appointment if your dog is showing symptoms.**



Pyometra explained

A pyometra is an infection inside the womb. Any unneutered dog is at risk of developing a pyometra, especially if they are over 6 years old.

Hormonal changes during a season/heat put your dog at risk of a womb infection. Once the heat is over, the majority return to normal, but unfortunately, some dogs develop complications, which lead to an infection (pyometra). As a pyometra develops, the womb fills with pus. A pyometra can lead to blood poisoning, kidney failure, peritonitis and even death.



This shocking comparison shows the difference in size between a healthy speyed womb and a pyometra.

We talk about a pyometra as either 'open' or 'closed'. **An open pyometra** is when the womb entrance is open, meaning you are likely to see blood and pus coming from your dog's vulva. **A closed pyometra** is when the womb entrance is shut; meaning you are unlikely to see any discharge. A closed pyometra is particularly dangerous because it is at risk of bursting.

It's very rare, but occasionally a neutered dog will develop a specific type of pyometra called a stump pyometra – read more below.

Hormone therapy used to treat an unwanted pregnancy increase the chance of a pyometra.

Symptoms

Symptoms of a pyometra usually begin four to eight weeks after a season, and include:

- Drinking more than usual
- Vomiting
- Pus leaking from vulva/vagina
- Bloated abdomen (tummy)
- Panting and weakness
- Off food
- Weeing more than usual
- Collapse

When to contact your vet

Contact your vet for an urgent appointment if you notice your dog showing symptoms of a pyometra. A pyometra is an emergency and your dog has the best chance of survival if they receive prompt treatment. **You know your dog best, if you are concerned it's always best to contact your vet.**

Diagnosis

Your vet will be able to diagnose your dog based on their symptoms and an ultrasound scan of their womb.

Treatment

A drip. Your dog is likely to need a fluid drip to keep them hydrated.

Surgery. Your dog will need emergency surgery to remove the pyometra.

Medicines. Alongside surgery, your dog is likely to need pain relief and antibiotics.

Hormones. Some dogs will receive hormonal treatment to help treat a pyometra but **treating with medicines alone is extremely risky and not recommended.**

Recovery

During recovery, you will need to care for your dog at home.

Buster collar. Your vet will put a buster collar on your dog to stop them licking their wound, make sure they keep it on until your vet says otherwise.

Staying calm. You will need to keep your dog calm to make sure they don't damage their stitches, especially the internal stitches that seal blood vessels.

Medicines. Give your dog all their prescribed medicines and call your vet if you are struggling – there may be alternatives. Our medication timetable might be helpful.

Pain. You will need to monitor your dog's pain levels and speak to your vet if you are concerned.

Outlook

The sooner your dog is treated, the better their chance of recovery. Unfortunately, chances of recovery are lower if your dog is old, poorly or if the pyometra has been present for a while.

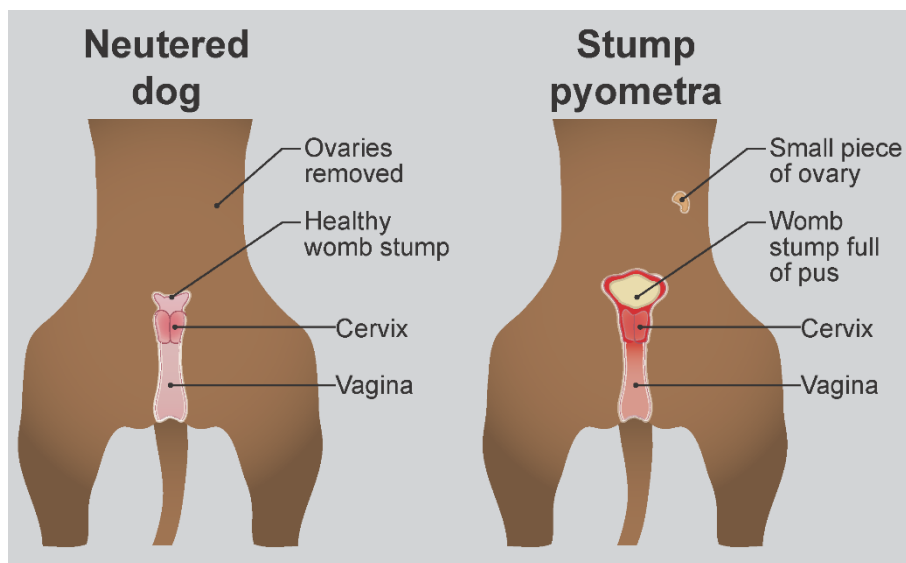
Prevention

Neutering is the best way to prevent a pyometra. Before your dog is spayed, monitor them closely after each season. Read our myth busting page if you are concerned about neutering.

Stump pyometra

After neutering, a small womb stump remains inside your dog. It's rare, but possible, for an infection to develop inside that stump – we call this a 'stump pyometra'.

Ovary hormones are necessary for a stump pyometra to develop, which means that any dog with the condition also has a small piece of ovary tissue inside them. It's likely that this small piece of ovary was not obvious at neutering, and as part of your dog's treatment they will need surgery to remove it.



Cost

Treatment for a pyometra is expensive. Consider insuring your dog as soon as you get them, before any signs of illness start. This will ensure you have all the support you need to care for them.

It's also very important to speak openly to your vet about your finances, the cost of treatment, as well as what you think is right for your dog. There are often several treatment options so if one doesn't work for you and your pet then the vet may be able to offer another.

FAQ

How long can my dog live with a pyometra?

If your dog has a pyometra, they need immediate treatment, leaving a pyometra without treatment is likely to cause severe illness, suffering and death.

What can I expect after pyometra surgery?

Removing an infected womb is major surgery; your dog will need careful monitoring and lots of support. Once your dog is ready to go home, your vet will advise you how to look after them. You will need to make sure they get plenty of rest, stay calm (no jumping/running/playing), that they eat, drink and receive any prescribed medicines. It's likely that your dog will need to wear a buster collar or protective suit to stop them licking at their wound.

Can antibiotics treat a pyometra?

Treating a pyometra with medicines alone (antibiotics, hormones and anti-inflammatories) is not recommended. Removing the infected womb is the most effective treatment. Using medicines alone is very risky and can lead to severe illness, prolonged suffering, and death.

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