

Diarrhoea in dogs

Overview

- Dogs tend to be prone to getting diarrhoea because of their curious mouths! Fortunately, most dogs recover in a couple of days.
- Medical treatment for diarrhoea is usually only necessary if a dog isn't improving or seems unwell and painful.
- It is very rare for a dog with diarrhoea to need antibiotics as part of their treatment.
- Diarrhoea left too long can lead to dehydration.
- Contact your vet for advice if your dog has diarrhoea.

Causes of diarrhoea in dogs

The most common causes of diarrhoea are:

Food related:

- Eating something they shouldn't have
- Food allergy
- After a change in food

Gut infections:

- Parvovirus
- Worms
- Giardia
- Bacterial gut infections - e.g. Salmonella or Campylobacter

Other causes of diarrhoea:

- Haemorrhagic gastroenteritis (HGE)
- Colitis

- Gut blockage (foreign body)
- Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)
- Pancreatitis
- Liver disease
- Exocrine Pancreatic Insufficiency (EPI)

When to contact your vet

Diarrhoea is often a problem that passes within a few days, but if it continues for too long, dehydration and more severe illness can develop. Contact your vet if your dog has the following symptoms:

- Severe diarrhoea (really watery or a lot of it)
- Constant diarrhoea
- Blood in their diarrhoea and/or mucus in their diarrhoea
- Diarrhoea that's been coming and going for a while
- Diarrhoea and other health issues
- Diarrhoea as a young puppy or an elderly dog
- Sleeping more than usual
- Eating less than usual
- Drinking less than usual
- Vomiting as well as having diarrhoea
- They're taking other medications, especially anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)
- Painful stomach (i.e. yelping when they are touched or picked up or standing in a 'prayer position' with their front legs on the floor and hind legs stood up – see image).

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



A dog sitting in the prayer position due to abdominal pain.

Will my dog need antibiotics?

It's very rare for a dog with diarrhoea to need antibiotics. There are a few specific conditions (such as Giardia) that require antibiotics, but most dogs won't benefit from taking them. Antibiotics can even make the problem worse by wiping out normal gut bacteria. Your vet may suggest alternative treatments such as probiotics.



Home care for dogs with diarrhoea

Diarrhoea in dogs is a very common problem, and fortunately, often passes within 1-2 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. Book an appointment with your vet if your dog isn't improving or if you're concerned at any point.

Suggestions to settle your dog's stomach:

24 hours fasting

Fasting your dog for 24 hours can help speed up recovery. Never fast an old dog, a young puppy or a dog that seems unwell.

A bland diet

Rich and fatty foods can make diarrhoea worse. Pre-made bland diets specifically for dogs with diarrhoea are available from your vet. Alternatively, home made plain boiled rice and chicken (without skin or bones) can be used.

Smaller meals

Feed your dog very small, regular meals throughout the day. This keeps 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 water they're losing in their poo. Make sure your dog has access to water at all times, 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 prevent them from doing anything energetic until they are feeling better. Speak to your vet if they are very lethargic.

Probiotics

Probiotics are friendly gut bacteria, 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 purchased at your vets or online.

Gradually reintroduce their normal food

Once your dog is passing solid poo you can start to reintroduce their normal food slowly over a few days.

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