

Enteritis in Dogs

Overview

Enteritis is an [inflammation](#) of the small intestine and is caused by a wide range of potential problems. [Parasites](#), [bacteria](#), [viruses](#), or [allergies](#) can all inflame the small intestines of your dog, causing [diarrhea](#). An obstruction in the digestive tract can also trigger enteritis, so that missing sock or favorite Christmas ornament could also be the culprit.

Risk and Signs

All dogs and puppies are at risk for enteritis. Along with diarrhea, your pet may also experience:

- Abdominal pain and other [stomach problems](#)
- Vomiting
- [Fever](#)
- Black, tarry feces ([melena](#))
- Weight loss

Diagnosis/Treatment

Because there are so many causes of enteritis, be sure to provide your veterinarian with a thorough history of your dog, including answers to the following:

- Symptoms?
- Travel history?
- Exposure to other dogs (such as going to the park or daycare)?
- Unsupervised access to your yard?
- [Leashed on walks](#)?
- Eaten any [foreign objects](#), e.g., a Christmas ornament?
- Eaten from garbage?
- Changes in dog [food](#)?

If your [veterinarian](#) suspects enteritis, he will want to identify the underlying cause. In order to do this, he may recommend a combination of the following tests:

- Chemistry tests to evaluate [kidney](#), [liver](#), and pancreatic function as well as sugar levels
- A complete blood count to rule out blood-related [conditions](#)
- Electrolyte tests to ensure your dog is neither dehydrated nor suffering from an electrolyte imbalance
- [X-rays](#) of the abdomen and intestinal tract to rule out obstructions
- An ultrasound to evaluate the integrity of your

dog's digestive tract

- An endoscopy to evaluate the intestinal tract
- Specific tests to rule out viral infections, such as parvovirus
- [Fecal tests](#) to identify if fecal [parasites](#) could be the cause
- Special fecal tests, such as cultures and polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing

Dogs with enteritis, regardless of the cause, are often dehydrated and sometimes need to be given intravenous fluids. Depending on the severity, your dog may be hospitalized to more quickly gain control of the [diarrhea](#) and other debilitating symptoms. In less severe cases, your veterinarian may give you [medications](#) and instructions regarding how to care for your pet at home. It is very important that you carefully follow the treatment instructions from your veterinarian, to reduce the chance of the diarrhea recurring.

Prevention

[Vaccinations](#) can protect your favorite dog from some of the viral causes of enteritis, such as parvovirus and [distemper](#). Some of the best ways to keep your pet healthy are to watch what he eats, keep him free of [parasites](#) with monthly preventatives, and submit his fecal samples to your veterinarian. Keeping your dog away from trash and other unfamiliar items, such as people [food](#), and restricting contact with potentially sick [dogs](#) in public places, like the park and boarding facilities, will also protect your dog from becoming sick.

If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian – they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of your pets.