

Gastroenteritis in Dogs

Overview

Gastroenteritis is an irritation of the [stomach](#) and intestines; it usually results in [vomiting](#) and [diarrhea](#). There are several causes of gastroenteritis: metabolic disorders, dietary indiscretion (this means ingesting inappropriate things, like garbage or the [feces of other animals](#)), [inflammatory bowel disease](#), parasites, bacteria, viruses, or allergies can all cause vomiting and diarrhea.

One of the leading causes of gastroenteritis is feeding a pet "people" food or table scraps. An obstruction in the digestive tract can also trigger gastroenteritis, so a missing sock or favorite holiday ornament could also be the culprit.

Risk and Signs

All dogs and puppies are at risk for gastroenteritis, which can cause extreme vomiting and diarrhea, leading to dehydration and an electrolyte imbalance. Contact your veterinarian immediately if the vomiting and diarrhea persist.

In addition to vomiting and diarrhea, your pet may seem listless or [depressed](#), and there may be blood in the stool or vomit.

Diagnosis/Treatment

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

- Symptoms?
- Travel history?
- Exposure to other dogs?
- Unsupervised access to your yard?
- [Leashed on walks](#)?
- Changes in dog [food](#)?
- Ingestion of foreign objects?
- Ingestion of garbage or people food?
- If your [veterinarian](#) suspects gastroenteritis, they will want to identify the underlying cause.

In order to do this, they may recommend a combination of the following tests:

- Chemistry tests to evaluate for kidney, liver and pancreatic function as well as sugar levels

- A complete blood count to evaluate inflammation, infection, anemia, and other blood-related conditions
- Electrolyte tests to ensure your dog is neither dehydrated nor suffering from an electrolyte imbalance
- [X-rays](#) of the abdomen to evaluate for foreign material and/or obstruction of the gastrointestinal tract
- Ultrasound imaging of your dog's digestive tract and other major abdominal organs
- An endoscopy to evaluate the lining of the stomach and 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 gastroenteritis, regardless of the cause, are often dehydrated and sometimes need to be given fluids under the skin (subcutaneously) or directly into a vein (intravenously). Depending on the severity, your dog may be hospitalized to get the diarrhea and vomiting under control. 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 follow the treatment instructions from your veterinarian carefully to reduce the chance of the diarrhea recurring.

Prevention

Some of the best ways to keep your dog healthy are to watch what he eats, keep him or her free of parasites with monthly preventatives, keep [vaccinations](#) current and [submit your dog's fecal samples to your veterinarian](#). Keeping your dog away from trash and other unfamiliar items, such as people food, and restricting your dog's contact with potentially sick dogs in public places, like the park and boarding facilities, will also protect her 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.

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See more about common dog stomach and gastrointestinal ailments

[Does Your Dog Have An Appetite for Life? Foreign Body Obstruction in Dogs](#)

[Inflammatory Bowel Disease in Dogs](#)

[Intestinal Parasites and Dogs A-Z](#)

[What "People Foods" Can Dogs Have?](#)

[Colitis in Dogs](#)

