



# THE TOP 20 DOG HEALTH PROBLEMS

## AND HOW TO PREVENT THEM



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## **Introduction**

Whether you've just picked up your first puppy from the breeder or the kennel, or you've been raising a dog for the last five years, the chance that you might face your dog's first illness is always present. As a dog owner, it is your responsibility to make sure your dog remains happy and healthy at all times.

To do that, you need to know exactly what actions you're taking now could lead to or prevent the common health problems that domestic canines face every year. Each breed is susceptible to different health problems, but if you spend time learning how to prevent and treat those issues now, you'll never need to worry about your dog being struck out of nowhere by any of the 20 ailments listed in this book.

Read carefully, take notes and make sure your dog never falls victim to any of these health issues. Remember that your dog cannot tell you when it doesn't feel well. The only way to properly treat these health problems is through prevention and early warning signs.

## **Ear Infection**

For a dog, ear infection is a very real possibility – the result of ear mites, bacteria, food allergies, bad hygiene, or an environmental factor that can get into their ear and cause problems. For the most part, ear infections need to be treated immediately by a veterinarian due to the very real threat they pose to your dog's health.

### **Warning Signs**

An ear infection should be treated immediately when recognized, so you should be constantly watching for signs that your dog's ears are not healthy. Do this with a weekly or biweekly check of their ear canals looking for signs including waxy discharge, red inflammation, constant scratching or general discomfort in your dog's behaviour.

### **Who Gets Ear Infections**

Ear infections are most common in dogs with floppy ears that do not get enough air. Moisture and dirt particles can get trapped in the ear and an infection can quickly form if you are not careful. Both fungus and yeast are common factors in ear infections due to the closed environment of a floppy eared dog. Cocker Spaniels, bloodhounds, beagles, dachshunds, and other floppy eared dogs should be checked regularly for signs of potential infection.

### **Avoiding Infections**

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To avoid ear infections, check your dog's ears regularly for signs of an odor or abnormal discharge of wax. You can clean your dog's ears as well if they produce excess wax. Don't use anything with a sharp end. Use cotton balls with a dog-specific cleaning solution to ensure you don't make it worse or get any liquid trapped in their ears.

Avoid any over the counter medicines or remedies before checking with your vet as well. Even in prevention of ear infections, it is best to check with your vet first and ask what specific measures might be good for your breed of dog.

If your dog gets an ear infection, see a vet immediately as the chance that it could spread to a middle or inner ear infection is too dangerous to wait on. Inner ear infections can spread to other parts of the body or create damaging high fevers.

## **Skin Allergy**

Dogs are just as susceptible to allergies as human beings and they don't have the benefit of going down to the store and picking up Claritin or Zyrtec. All they can do is lick, chew or scratch at the hot spots and marks they get on their skin as a result. If your dog starts to show any of the signs of a skin allergy, the vet should be your first stop. However, there are many things you can do to avoid these issues cropping up at all.

### **Warning Signs**

Skin allergies will appear in a few different forms. Allergies themselves are most frequently related to flea bites, followed by food allergies, and then inhalant allergies such as dust or pollens. The skin will often grow irritated and red. Swelling may occur, but will most often be a result of excess scratching or biting by your dog.

If your dog starts to lose hair as a result of the reaction or gets an ear infection, it might be a long term food allergy related to their dry food – a common problem that occurs in many dogs that eat processed dog foods.

### **Who Gets Skin Allergies**

Any dog can come down with skin allergies. There is no particular indicator that makes a single dog more likely to get sick. However, dogs that are fed dry food too early do have a higher rate of food allergies and short haired dogs are more likely to suffer from skin contact allergies. Additionally, dogs that are bred for water sports or hunting tend to be less susceptible to flea bite allergies and moisture issues, though this is not exclusive. Any dog can suffer from dampness and flea bites.

### **Avoiding Skin Problems**

Skin problems can be avoided in a number of ways. To start with, make sure your dog is given flea medication a regular basis. This is important not just for flea bite

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allergies, but for avoiding potential sickness from tick bites or other parasites that will latch on to your dog when they go outside.

Additionally, avoid feeding your dog foods with too many grain fillers. Of the grains, rice is the safest with corn, soy and wheat all directly linked to allergens that dogs can develop. Processed meats can also cause food allergies, and table scraps should be strictly avoided due to the foods that a dog cannot process in them.

If your dog starts to show signs of skin problems for any reason, see your vet. He will likely take blood tests and possibly put your dog on an elimination diet to see how his allergic reactions respond. Very often, basic nutritional changes can be all a dog needs to get better.

## **Skin Infections and Hot Spots**

While red spots and inflammation on a dog's skin might be caused by allergies, there are more severe skin problems that can develop in the form of actual infections or hot spots where fur recedes, swelling occurs and the dog starts to show signs of infection, such as reduced appetite, lethargy, or general malaise.

Skin infections come in many forms. Superficial Pyoderma is the most common and the one your dog is most likely to experience – also known as hot spots. They are caused by the overgrowth of bacteria on the surface of the dog's skin and are avoidable and very easily treatable if caught early.

### **Warning Signs**

There are not usually any warning signs of hot spots. They will show up one day and need to be treated immediately. A hot spot is usually indicated by circular patches where the hair is missing and the skin gets swollen, itchy, and exudes pus. The dog will often lick, bite, and scratch to the point of causing injury or even bleeding to the area. Hot spots that are not treated promptly will often grow and make your dog very irritable and possibly sick.

### **Who Gets Hot Spots**

Dogs most commonly susceptible to hot spots include those with heavy coats, histories of infections and allergies, fleas, problems with their anal sacs, grooming issues and hair tangles. Keep in mind, however, that even a perfectly healthy short haired dog can get hot spots out of nowhere so it is not a limited issue.

Humidity and warmth can increase the risk of hot spots due to trapped moisture and an infection can be formed *after* a dog sheds because they lick too much. Hot spots will most commonly occur on the legs, backside, flanks, and feet – the places where a dog can lick and bite most easily. Severe hot spots can also appear on the neck, ears and head as well though.

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## **Avoiding Infections**

To avoid hot spots, target the cause of the problem and then treat it. If it is a grooming issue, make sure you're combing your dog as often as twice a day. If they have allergies, see a vet and get them treated for the allergies – either with a new diet or with antihistamines. If the process seems to be psychological, you may need to get them more exercise and keep them busy so they don't get so bored as to cause these infections.

## **Vomiting**

Every dog vomits – probably a lot more often than we do. It is a natural method of removing any foreign bodies or debris that they may have ingested, something we know our dogs are all too eager to do on a regular basis. So, for the most part, you can ignore vomiting, but every now and then it can be a symptom of something much worse.

### **Warning Signs**

Most often, if vomiting is a serious health issue, it is accompanied by other symptoms including diarrhea, lethargy, behavioural problems and more. Additionally, if your dog vomits multiple times, it can be a sign of something worse. There are two forms of vomiting you need to be wary of.

If your dog vomits multiple times suddenly – acute vomiting – it could be a medical emergency and should be treated immediately. On the other hand, if your dog vomits every week or so like clockwork, it could be a chronic issue related to an allergy or illness.

### **Who Has Vomiting Problems**

Vomiting does not relate to any one dog breed. Instead it relates to the specific health problems a dog may have. Acute vomiting can be caused by a sudden change in diet or the ingestion of something your dog's body doesn't know how to digest. It can also result from quick ingestion of dry food. To avoid these issues, feed your dog in smaller meals more frequently and don't give them any table scraps.

Parasites and worms can also cause vomiting in your dog. Roundworms are particularly common causes of vomiting, along with Giardia, and Coccidia, which will sometimes show in the feces or vomit.

If your dog vomits repeatedly suddenly, it could mean their digestive tract is blocked by a foreign object or they ingested a poison. See a vet immediately if this is the case. Obstructions will often be accompanied by bloating and a complete lack of movement as well.

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There is no direct way to avoid vomiting. Don't give your dog table scraps, don't feed them large meals if they eat too fast, and don't let them play with anything that they could easily ingest if they get too carried away. And, as always, see a vet immediately if your dog exhibits any signs of additional illness or vomits more than once successively.

## **Diarrhea**

Nothing is more upsetting (for multiple reasons) than your dog getting diarrhea when you take him for a walk. The problem is that you never know for sure what may have caused the diarrhea or how you can treat it. So, the easiest way to handle it is to watch for any other symptoms and report to the vet anything you find.

### **Warning Signs**

Diarrhea is often a sign of an upset intestinal tract or possible disease. The former is more common and can be the result of eating something unkind to a dog's body, worms or parasites, or anxiety. It's important to look in the diarrhea for signs of worms and parasites that are visible, blood, mucous or strange colors that do not look natural. It is best to take a stool sample with you to the vet as well.

You may also notice that a dog will show signs of disease when they have diarrhea. Look for vomiting, depression, dehydration, or any unwillingness to eat or drink.

### **Who Gets Diarrhea**

Dogs get diarrhea for any number of reasons. Standard reasons that make a dog sick and you can control include feeding them food that doesn't fit in with their normal diet. Table scraps are an especially problematic source of diarrhea. They can also get sick from getting into the trash, eating other dog's poop, or simply having their food changed too suddenly.

### **Avoiding Diarrhea**

If your dog gets diarrhea and has no other serious symptoms, start by withholding food (not water) for a day. This will allow the dog's digestive tract to settle and get back to normal. Then, reintroduce them to a bland diet of chicken and rice without any flavouring or additions (freshly cooked and cooled by you).

If the dog's feces return to normal, you've found the cause. If they do not, it is time to call the vet. Additionally, to avoid common causes, don't feed your dog table scraps and if you change their food, do it slowly over time. Don't just suddenly change dry foods on him. Change it a quarter cup at a time to give his body time to react.

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## **Bladder Infection**

A bladder infection is a common internal infection that can be caused by bacteria getting into your dog's urinary tract, bladder, or kidneys. At first, it can be very hard to identify the symptoms of a urinary infection in a dog, but with time, you'll be able to see that the dog is in a great deal of pain when they urinate and grow generally ill-tempered as a result of the pain. As an internal infection, however, if you ignore a bladder problem, it could progress to the other organs and possibly even become fatal.

### **Warning Signs**

A dog will generally let you know if he or she is victim of a urinary infection. The dog will start needing to go to the bathroom much more often than normal. It might also start to whine or cry whenever it urinates and it might appear there is straining or pushing to pee. The urine itself will not smell like ammonia, but will be fetid and unhealthy, possibly a different color. Blood and pus might also be in the urine if the infection has spread.

The dog will also lick their genitals for an extended period of time in many cases and they might even urinate in the house due to the slow loss of control over their bodily functions. A fever can also develop and if it is bad enough, kidney problems will follow.

### **Who Gets Bladder Infections**

Any dog can get a urinary tract infection. It is one of the very unfortunate effects of peeing outside. Smaller dogs might be more susceptible due to their low position to the ground, and females have slightly higher rates due to how they pee. Generally, however, there are no indicators for how a bladder infection might occur.

### **Treating Infections**

To treat a urinary tract infection in your dog, you'll likely need to see your vet immediately. Give your dog a lot of water with a bit of extra Vitamin C and citrus fruits added to it. Walk the dog more often so they don't have to hold any urine that builds up in their bladder and if the vet provides antibiotics, administer them regularly. It is also believed that a vegetarian diet can be very helpful in reducing the infection as it is low in nitrogen and will help the healing process speed up.

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## **Arthritis**

Like human beings, dogs can suffer from arthritis as they age, slowly developing a number of signs that they can no longer get up and enjoy the outdoors in the same way they always did. There are some dogs that are more susceptible to arthritis, but all dogs may develop it as they age due to the nature of their joints, especially their hips and shoulders.

### **Warning Signs**

The most common dogs to develop arthritis are those that grow overweight and don't get enough exercise. Additionally, younger dogs can get arthritis if they sustain an injury that puts undue stress on the joints. Hip dysplasia is a major issue for many dogs that result in arthritis so bad they cannot move.

Osteoarthritis is the most common form of arthritis and results from the breakdown of cartilage from over use. When your dog gets older, watch for any signs that they are losing their full range of motion. If they slow down, cannot get up stairs, or have trouble getting into the car at any point, you should see a vet to determine the extent of the arthritis and if the dog needs medication or aids to live their life as normal.

### **Who Gets Arthritis**

All dogs get arthritis at some point in life, but dogs that overeat and put undue stress on their joints can suffer much more from it than others. If your dog is overweight, especially in old age, consider a diet and exercise routine. Many times, this can help a great deal in reducing the effects of arthritis.

Also, pure bred dogs are generally more susceptible to arthritis, especially large dogs with a lot of weight put on their joints. Oddly shaped dogs like Dachshunds or beagles are also more likely to have joint problems due to the stresses on their joints.

### **Avoiding Arthritis**

Arthritis can be avoided with regular exercise, good diet and a careful eye for whenever your dog's range of motion decreases. It is inevitable as they age, however, and will eventually be an issue that needs to be attended by a vet. A number of medications are available to reduce pain and improve range of motion as your dog gets older, especially if they need to exercise to keep their joints active.

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## **Soft Tissue Trauma**

Dogs can get injured just as easily, if not more so than we do. They get wound up, they play around, and they ultimately get injured because of that excitement if you're not careful. Soft tissue includes the muscles, tendons, and ligaments surrounding the joints and bones and can be injured in any number of ways – through tweaks to the legs, running into objects or being hit by moving objects like cars or bicycles. The severity of the soft tissue damage will determine how strong the treatment needs to be, though surgery may be required.

### **Diagnosis**

It is hard to diagnose soft tissue damage in a dog, because again they cannot simply tell you “my ankle hurts”. You will need to visit your vet and have X-rays taken to determine the source of their pain. Usually limping, yipping and immobility will accompany swelling of the area where the damage occurred.

Even if there is no actual bone damage on an X-ray, soft tissue damage is usually a common diagnosis when swelling and pain occurs around a joint or in a muscle. Often, the use of medicine and rest are needed to keep the dog off the affected joint until it can heal.

### **Treatment**

The actual treatment your dog will need for soft tissue damage will vary based on your vet, the size of your dog, and the severity of the injury. Usually mild bruising will be treated with anti-inflammatories like aspirin and carprofen with improvement in as little as 3-5 days. If the damage is more moderate with stretching, a splint may be added and in the case of serious injury where the joint has been harmed or the ligament has ruptured, surgery is generally required.

Usually, after 3-5 days of evaluation with medication, the injury will be reassessed to determine if the dog needs to have surgery or a stronger medication.

### **Avoiding Injuries**

The easiest way to avoid the common causes of soft tissue damage is to keep your dog under control. Don't allow him to run free off a leash and make sure he stays within site at all times. Puppies especially should be limited in where they can go, both inside and outdoors.

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## **Cancer/Tumors**

Like human beings, dogs are susceptible to a number of forms of benign and malignant cancers in their skin, bones and organs. Each type of cancer is different in its growth rate, symptoms, and prognosis. Most cancers, however, are treatable in dogs if they are identified early enough and many tumors that are found with routine screening are benign and can be removed without extensive treatment.

### **Warning Signs**

Once a dog reaches 10 years of age, he has a nearly 50% chance of contracting some form of cancer. However, even younger dogs can develop tumors and cancers and it is important that you watch for the variety of possible warning signs. The good news is that around 60% of all diagnosed cancer in dogs is benign – the result of fatty tumors that can be relatively easily removed.

The actual symptoms to watch for vary depending on the cancer type:

- Abdominal - Vomiting, diarrhea, weight loss, swollen abdomen, lethargy
- Mammary – Lump or swelling in mammary tissue (dogs that are spayed before they have a chance to go into heat do not develop this form of cancer.
- Lymphoma – Swollen lymph nodes, stops eating, lethargy, general illness.
- Testicular – Lumps and lethargy (does not affect neutered males)

Additional symptoms include the presence of any quickly growing lump or spot with strange coloring on your dog, issues with eating or drinking, coughing, breathing problems, or blood in either urine, vomit, or feces.

### **Who Gets Cancer**

Any dog can develop cancer, though some breeds may be more susceptible than others. Additionally, unaltered dogs are far more likely to get cancer than those that are safely spayed and neutered at a young age. Pure bred dogs with long lines of inbreeding can also present with higher tumor rates, though there is no link between those tumors and malignant cancer.

### **Avoidance and Treatment**

Avoiding cancer is not always possible. There are some steps you can take to keep them safe though. First, avoid letting your dog get too much sun as they are susceptible to skin cancer, just like us. Additionally, make sure to have them spayed or neutered young. Avoid any unnatural, processed foods as well. Chemicals in their water as well as plastic bowls or toys can also be possible sources of the carcinogens that lead to cancer.

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There is no medically proven link between specific things in a dog's diet or play habits that lead to cancer, however, so exact avoidance is hard. Once a dog is diagnosed with cancer, the tumor will be removed with an immediate surgery, followed by possible treatment with chemotherapy if it persists.

## **Eye Infection**

Dogs don't have hands, which makes it pretty tough for them to wipe their eyes clean of the goop and crud that can build up over time. Toss in a little bacteria from the ground or their own bodies and they can develop eye infections that lead to redness, swelling and discharge.

### **Warning Signs**

Eye infection will be preceded by a number of warning signs including discharge that is often thick and discoloured, along with red and swollen eyes. They may also suffer from bloodshot eyes and will appear to be squinting, often pawing at their eyes – which can make it worse.

Keep in mind, however, that a dog with inhalant allergies can also suffer from similar symptoms. Either way, a trip to the vet can help you determine which route you're dealing with.

### **Who Gets Eye Infections**

Some dogs are more likely to get eye infections than others. Breeds that have tear straining include Maltese, Lhasa Apso, Shih Tzu and similar small dogs. Normal eye discharge and excess fur around the eyes are both issues that can lead to further infections.

### **Avoiding Infections**

To avoid infections, keep your dog's eyes clean, wiping away the normal discharge that comes from their eyes each day. Also, groom their faces each day to avoid any fur matting. If your dog gets an eye infection, take them to the vet for antibiotic treatment. Also, if the infection is conjunctivitis, you may need to have other pets in your home treated as it is highly contagious.

## **Congestive Heart Failure**

Another common health problem that strikes both humans and dogs is congestive heart failure. The disease can be caused by a number of factors, including genetics,

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heredity, and environment. The result is a weakening of the heart that can lead to a drop in blood pressure and the ability to safely pump blood through the body.

### **Warning Signs**

Most often, there will be no immediate symptoms of congestive heart failure. A heart murmur or weakened heart beat may accompany your dog's annual physical, leading to additional testing to rule out possible disease. Your vet will likely do heartworm testing to rule out the possibility of infection. They will also check the lungs and abdomen for excess fluid, and see how blood flow is maintained in their gums.

If the dog suffers from more advanced heart failure before diagnosis, it may have a dry cough that gets worse when they are resting, a lack of energy to play, and general lethargy with increased breathing while at rest.

### **Who Gets Heart Failure**

Congestive heart failure in a dog is more common as they age. While some younger dogs can get the disease due to things like heart worm, the majority of naturally occurring CHF is due to a gradual breakdown of the heart muscle leading to failure.

### **Avoiding Heart Failure**

As your dog ages, make sure to keep him as active as is comfortable and keep a close eye on his food. Avoid anything that might lead to obesity in your dog and make sure he is only fed two or three times a day with the recommended daily allotment of food. Excess pressure on his body from too much food or too little exercise can be a major contributing factor. Additionally, if you live in an area with heartworm carrying mosquitos, make sure to have your dog tested annually and treated with monthly heartworm medication.

## **Hip Dysplasia**

Of all the diseases your dog may suffer from, one of the most frustrating is hip dysplasia. It strikes dogs at any age, often times as young as two years. The disease is orthopaedic in nature and will lead to the abnormal formation of the hip which then causes looseness in the joint and cartilage damage. The result is severe, early onset arthritis that can make movement by your dog much tougher.

### **Warning Signs**

Hip Dysplasia will be preceded by a drop off in energy levels, a difficulty in standing or moving and a lameness in your dog's back legs. The dog will stop wanting to use the stairs, especially when going up them, and will rarely want to stand up on its back limbs or jump up on anything. They will start hopping with their back legs to walk and will show signs of soreness when they lie down, especially after heavy

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exercise. If your dog shows any of these signs, regardless of their age, it's important to get them to the vet for X-rays as soon as possible.

### **Who Gets Hip Dysplasia**

Dysplasia is a genetic disease that passes down through a specific lineage of dogs. If you have two loose hipped dogs mate with each other, the result is often a dysplasia stricken puppy. Of course, not all dogs with the disease suffer from it or show symptoms so it can be hard to determine if your new puppy has a heredity.

There are some environmental factor as well, including obesity, too much protein in food (such as in cat food), or too many vitamins and minerals. Things that are designed to make puppies grow faster have been shown to increase the risk of dysplasia and arthritis as well.

### **Treating Dysplasia**

There are quite a few ways to treat dysplasia. More conservative, non-invasive treatments include weight loss, pain medication, physical therapy, and basic exercise routines to work the hips.

If the disease has grown to a severe enough state, surgery may become an option instead of simple treatments. In one case, the veterinarian will attempt to slow the spread of arthritis while other methods will work to salvage the degenerating hips before they can get too worried by the disease.

The only real way to know which treatment is best for your dog is to see a vet and have the necessary X-rays and tests done to determine the extent of their dysplasia. A vet will then determine what works best to treat those particular issues.

### **Obesity**

Much like people, simple obesity is one of the most serious health problems that dogs get. As many as 40% of domestic dogs suffer from obesity and the worst part is that almost all of it is preventable. However, when a dog is allowed to remain obese for an extended period of time, they will start having trouble with basic exercise, develop breathing problems, and in the long term might suffer from diabetes, heart disease or organ failure.

### **Warning Signs**

Dogs that eat even 1% more calories than they need can suffer from obesity within just a few short years. To treat their obesity, you must maintain a careful, healthy diet over time. Most of the time, it is hard to recognize a dog is overweight without checking their weight at the vet and getting perspective on what they are supposed to weigh. However, severe obesity will come with symptoms like lethargy, breathing difficulties, coughing, or excess appetite.

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## **Causes of Obesity**

Obesity is caused purely by eating too much and exercising too little. There are additional diseases that can cause obesity, so it is good to see a vet if your dog is having any trouble losing weight. Most of the time, however, the simplest routine is to reduce caloric intake, cutting feedings back to set times throughout the day and removing all table scraps and treats. Additionally, make sure your dog gets the daily exercise he needs to maintain his weight level and not get too fat.

Fiber and water intake are also good to keep their bowels and digestive process moving. You should weigh your dog regularly to check their progress and see a vet on a regular basis to ensure no health issues are developing.

## **Diabetes**

Diabetes in dogs is the same as it is for human beings – the result of a deficiency in the insulin hormone, causing a decrease in their ability to metabolize sugars in their blood. It is the single most common endocrine disease dogs can get and comes in two forms, the same as for human beings.

Type I diabetes is when the body does not produce enough Insulin. Type II diabetes is when the body stops being able to use the Insulin effectively to process sugars. Almost all dogs get Type I diabetes, with very few cases of Type II ever reported.

## **Warning Signs**

Your dog will start to show a number of symptoms when diabetes becomes an issue. They will grow excessively thirsty, need to urinate more often, will lose weight despite how much they eat, may become suddenly blind, and will grow lethargic and lose body definition in their muscles.

To actually diagnose Diabetes, your vet will need to do a full physical to check for a urinary tract infection and to check things like Glucose levels, blood count, and pancreatitis. A number of other diseases must first be ruled out before diabetes can be fully diagnosed.

## **The Causes of Diabetes**

There is no prevention method for Diabetes Type I – it is almost entirely genetic, and the hereditary factors that lead to it are hard to pinpoint, so determining if your dog is likely to contract it is hard. Simply keep a close eye on their habits and watch for symptoms.

## **Treating Diabetes**

Once your dog is diagnosed with diabetes, you will need to start providing a twice-daily injection of Insulin. There are some oral medications as well, but most of them

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will require that the Pancreas is still working to some degree. In addition to the insulin, you'll want to maintain their weight with a high fiber diet, regular exercise, and absolutely no outside foods. There are also certain drugs, like steroids that need to be avoided in a diabetic dog.

## **Dental Disease**

Dogs can't brush their own teeth, and as a result, they can easily suffer from Periodontitis or dental disease from the spread of bacteria in their gums. Periodontitis is the single most common type of infectious disease in dogs and is generally spread by the bacteria in plaque, especially when not properly controlled by regular brushing and cleanings.

It can lead to tooth loss, jaw fracture, and other diseases as the bacteria are ingested with food on a daily basis.

### **Warning Signs**

There are a number of signs of Periodontitis. To start with, a dog will have bad breath, usually followed by bleeding gums. With just these symptoms, the disease can still be stopped and treated relatively easily. However, once it develops further, other symptoms might include tooth loss, tooth extrusion, ulcers in the mouth, gum recession, and poor appetite due to pain.

Actually diagnosing the disease starts with a full medical workup and a mouth X-ray to check the total health of the dog's teeth. Because 70% of the teeth are below the gum line, it is important to see what is happening down there. Usually, general anaesthesia is required to do a full dental work up next.

### **Treating Dental Disease**

After diagnosis, the dental disease is treated with antimicrobial drugs, antiseptics, and a series of dental procedures such as ultrasonic scaling, root planning and pocketing in the teeth to remove the affected areas. In severe cases of bone loss, extraction will be required to stop the spread of the disease through your dog's mouth.

### **Avoiding Infections**

The easiest way to avoid dental disease in your dog is to brush their teeth daily with a pet dental product. You should also have their teeth checked every 6 months or so by the veterinarian. If your dog does not allow the checking of his teeth, it may be less frequent.

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## **Gastroenteritis**

Gastroenteritis is a general term that applies to any inflammation of your dog's intestinal lining or stomach. The causes can range greatly – from simple anxiety or food change to a severe disease or parasitic infection. Usually, severe digestive symptoms will appear along with the gastroenteritis and will persist until treatment is administered.

### **Warning Signs**

A dog with a stomach issue will usually have acute vomiting or diarrhea that lasts for a number of days along with dehydration, depression, blood in the stool or vomit, and lethargy. Keep in mind that if your dog vomits or has diarrhea occasionally, it is not a direct symptom that they have gastroenteritis. It could merely be something they ate. But, if it persists, it very well may be a disease or infection that needs to be treated immediately.

### **Who Gets Gastroenteritis**

Gastroenteritis can be caused by a number of factors. Eating foods that are not healthy for dogs is usually a first stop for most vets in diagnosis. They may also be allergic or intolerant to a specific food like corn or wheat, or it could be the result of a toxin or specific infection.

Other possible issues could include blockages or obstructions (which must be treated immediately), metabolic issues with kidneys or the liver, bowel disease, ulcers, cancer, pancreatitis, or other abdominal diseases.

### **Treatment**

The most common treatment for gastroenteritis is to ensure that the dog gets the electrolytes needed to supply nutrients to the body and keep it hydrated. Food is usually withheld for 24 hours as well to reset the dog's digestive tract and when it is reintroduced, mild, bland food with rice and boiled chicken are used to get your dog's digestion back on track. There are also drugs that can soothe the digestive tract or others that will stop diarrhea or vomiting.

The easiest way to avoid stomach issues from environmental sources is to limit what your dog eats and what they have access to. Keep your garbage out of reach; don't feed them table scraps, and feed them mild foods that are not too rough on their body.

## **Pancreatitis**

When the pancreas becomes suddenly inflamed and activates various enzymes that start digesting itself, pancreatitis develops and can cause a number of advanced

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health issues in your dog. The pancreas itself produces bicarbonate to reduce stomach acid as well as other enzymes to help in digestion. There are no set reasons for why a dog might develop pancreatitis, but general causes are usually related to poor diet and obesity.

A dog that eats a high fat diet, has liver disease, or has recently been under for surgery or been subject to whole body infections is more likely to contract the disease.

### **Warning Signs**

Warning signs and symptoms for pancreatitis vary greatly. Most dogs with pancreatitis will experience a loss in appetite, followed by severe lethargy and possible vomiting or diarrhea.

Signs of pain and fever are also common, along with general weakness and disinterest in playing or being active. Because these symptoms are so much like many other diseases, it is very important to see a vet immediately for a proper diagnosis. It could be as simple as food poisoning or as severe as pancreatitis.

Actual diagnosis is done by checking blood counts and doing a number of chemical tests to check for the enzymes emblematic of pancreatitis.

### **Treatment of Pancreatitis**

If your dog is diagnosed with pancreatitis, know that it can be immediately life threatening and should be treated right away. Food and water are often held for as long as 72 hours, followed by subcutaneous or intravenous fluid administration. When food and water are reintroduced, it is done very gradually to see how the dog responds.

If the dog does not vomit for 24 hours, the food will be increased with fat reintroduced. Dogs are also held in a crate if they have pain to keep them from moving, and if there is an infection, antibiotics will be administered.

It's hard to prevent pancreatitis, because it is hard to pinpoint an exact cause. The easiest ways to avoid the factors that lead to the disease are to reduce the fat in their diet and help them lose excess weight if they are obese. Do not feed them table scraps, keep sodium levels low and get them exercise on a daily basis.

## **Kidney Failure**

Throughout all dogs there is a risk of chronic kidney failure. When it happens, the body is no longer able to remove the wastes from the dog's body in the form of urine and toxins will start to build up which can lead to a number of illness symptoms.

### **Warning Signs**

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Dogs that might be suffering from kidney failure will often show an increased thirst followed by excessive drinking and increased urination. They will also show severe lethargy and may even start vomiting with a strong, fetid odor in their vomit and their normal breath. They will also stop eating as much and show signs of weakness as a result. They could also show signs of depression and may lose general coordination while walking.

### **Who Suffers from Kidney Failure**

While all dogs can suffer from kidney failure, certain breeds are more susceptible than others. Breeds with high kidney failure rates include:

- Bull Terrier
- Cocker Spaniel
- Samoyed
- Lhasa Apso
- German Shepherd
- Shit Tzu
- Cairn Terrier
- Norwegian Elkhound
- Golden Retriever
- Wheaten Terrier
- Doberman Pinscher

Additionally, there are a number of diseases that can lead to kidney failure including excess toxins in the body, bad blood flow, infections, various inflammations, cancer, or other immune system problems.

### **Treatment for Kidney Failure**

There is not actual cure for kidney failure, but early diagnosis can help in treatment. Usually, treatment includes advanced fluid therapy, careful management of blood abnormalities with IV drugs, special diet with phosphorous and protein restrictions, as much water as the dog can drink and special care to make sure they have everything they need. They may also need anemia management and vomiting control with special drugs.

It is generally not recommended that you treat your dog at home for renal failure – you should see a vet immediately.

There are no known ways to prevent renal failure. Make sure your dog can urinate and drink as much as he needs to and avoid any situations where he has access to ethylene glycol – a contributor to renal failure.

## **Kennel Cough**

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Kennel cough is an infectious disease that causes heavy, honk-like coughing in your dog that can be highly contagious and very dangerous if not treated immediately. In fact, it is so dangerous that most kennels and boarding locations require vaccination from it before they'll keep your dog overnight.

Dogs most likely to obtain kennel cough are those that have been held in locations with a number of other dogs. Young dogs and puppies are especially susceptible to the cough as they can get sick much faster and more severely.

### **Warning Signs**

There are a number of signs that your dog has contracted kennel cough. The first is the upper respiratory symptoms like irritated eyes, runny nose and sneezing. They will then develop the signature cough – a loud cough that sounds like a honk. It will get worse when they get excited or active and will appear as though they have something stuck in their throats. They might even vomit lightly or cough up fluid with severe bouts. If they develop pneumonia as a result, they will show signs of fever and depression as well.

Other symptoms include general depression, breathing problems, loss of appetite and fever. If you see even one of these symptoms, it's time to see your vet immediately.

A veterinarian will use chest X-rays to check for pneumonia as well as basic blood tests and fecal tests to rule out the chance of a parasite.

### **Treating Kennel Cough**

Kennel cough itself is not necessarily all that dangerous as it is akin to the human cold in that it will eventually die off and is not treatable with antibiotics. However, it can develop infections such as pneumonia, so it should be treated at least mildly to keep it from spreading.

Cough suppressants, antibiotics for dogs that have developed infections, and at times antivirals are given to treat the cough. At home, you will need to keep your dog away from other dogs, minimize their exercise, get them plenty of fluids, and open their airway by removing their collar and giving them plenty of room inside.

Prevention can be optimized with the Kennel Cough vaccine. Even without vaccine, you can limit their exposure by keeping them away from large groups of unvaccinated dogs and by deworming dogs from a young age.

## **Epilepsy**

Dogs can suffer from epilepsy and seizures in a number of forms. The actual cause of epilepsy is still unknown and can be either genetic or develop over time with unknown environmental factors. There are a number of ways a dog might have a

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seizure. They could look far away and twitch lightly, or they could fall to the ground with their whole body shaking, barking and even defecation and urination.

A seizure will usually happen with no warning and can last for as long as a few minutes and there is no known link between seizures and particular breeds of dogs.

### **What to Watch For**

A seizure will consist of three specific things:

- Aura – There will be small signs of a seizure about to happen including whining, shaking, wandering, hiding, or general restlessness. They may last for hours before a seizure occurs.
- Ictus – This is the actual seizure and it can last for a wide duration. Generally, the dog will lose control of his body during this time.
- Postictal – After a seizure, a dog will appear disoriented and will start wandering or pacing. He may remain unresponsive and continue salivating for some time. This could last for days in some cases.

Do not feel like you should be able to recognize the symptoms of a seizure before it occurs. In some dogs, it's impossible to know when it's about to happen.

### **Handling a Seizure**

When a seizure occurs, you should not panic because your dog is not suffering. Make sure to time how long the seizure lasts for and record it for the vet. Make sure to move any objects away so the dog cannot hurt himself and take note of what the dog does or moves during the seizure for your vet's notes.

If the seizure lasts beyond 5 minutes, you need to call an emergency vet immediately.

Note: Don't worry about your dog swallowing his tongue. They don't do this and you will likely get bit or block his airway if you try to put something in their mouth.

### **Treatment**

If it is the first seizure, see a vet with the data you recorded. If your dog does not recover after a seizure within a half hour, contact the vet and follow their directions.

There are drug treatments for epilepsy, including phenobarbital, diazepam, and bromide – all for different levels of seizures. Your vet may also give specific at-home restrictions including diet and exercise guidelines. Make sure you keep up to date with your vet whenever a seizure occurs.

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## Recommended Reading

### **The Ultimate Guide to Dog Health**

By Mark Edwards

<http://www.beagletraining.net/go/doghealth>

The Ultimate Guide to Dog Health covers all the common health problems (both serious and not) that dogs suffer from; the overall focus is on being prepared and taking preventative action; it teaches you how to accurately self-diagnose (with the assistance of step-by-step flowcharts which tell you whether he'll be fine by himself, whether he needs to see the vet, and how urgently the vet should be seen); and, while it's packed with knowledge and advice from veterinarians and trained dog-care specialists, it's easy on the eye and reader-friendly ... you can actually understand what they're trying to say!

In a nutshell, it's detailed (but not dauntingly so), comprehensive (covering all the common ailments and illnesses), knowledgeable (while retaining a conversational, easy-to-understand tone) and it gives you the kind of introduction to canine healthcare that'll allow you to take good care of your dog - without spending unnecessary time and effort trying to absorb the jargon of a veterinary textbook!

What's Actually Covered?

The book deals with all the common problems and ailments suffered by dogs. It covers issues like toothache and dental trouble, ear infections, skin rashes and chafing, eye irritations, worming issues, and lameness; chronic problems like vomiting, diarrhea, coughing, asthma, breathing trouble, and liver problems; more severe issues like arthritis and cancer; and symptomatic "alerts" like hair loss, lethargy, and behavioral changes.

On top of that, you also learn how to pick up early warning signs by identifying and accurately interpreting your dog's body language; how to groom your dog quickly and effectively; how to take good care of his teeth and gums; how to administer medicine safely and easily; and how to recognize the early warning signs of health trouble through behavioral and physical changes. All this information is fully supplemented by full-color diagrams, photographs, and illustrations.

Something for Nothing...

In addition to the fully-illustrated, 240-page guide itself, you also get a handful of tempting freebies: specifically, four bonus books.

There's "The Ultimate Guide to Dog First Aid", which is an incredibly useful resource for those situations requiring an immediate response (including how to perform the canine Heimlich maneuver and doggie CPR); "180 Gourmet Recipes for Your Dog",

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which really teaches you how to indulge your pooch's taste buds; "101 Ways to Spoil Your Dog for Under \$10?", detailing all kinds of luxuries-on-a-budget and activities for you and your dog to enjoy together; and "20 Super-Healthy Recipes for Your Dog? - which proves that doggie health-food is as delicious as anything else! These books have a combined value of over \$80 - not a bad freebie!

#### The Ultimate Guide to Dog Health: Summed Up

All in all, I couldn't be happier with this product. It's exactly what I was looking for - and even if I hadn't spent the last decade or so wishing for a book just like it, I think I'd still snap it up in a second: it's that useful.

This is an information resource that every responsible dog owner should have access to. Not only does it enable you to make good decisions about the more serious health issues commonly suffered by dogs, but you learn a lot about the minor, day-to-day ailments and afflictions that almost every dog will encounter from time to time, as well as a host of useful facts on preventative care.

This comprehensive guide to dog health will help you to spot little problems before they become big ones: truly indispensable.

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