

# Pancreatitis

Canine Pancreatitis is a very serious condition that occurs when the pancreas becomes swollen or inflamed and can be potentially fatal to your pet. It is usually caused by feeding fatty foods and table scraps (i.e. smoked meats, fatty meats such as pork, bacon or roast, and smoked treats) but any extension of dietary change bring it on. This inflammation is usually caused by an excess production of digestive fluids in the pancreas. These fluids subsequently begin to “digest” the pancreas, causing irritation, damage, and a significant amount of pain for your dog. Because of the nature of pancreatitis, and the possible long-term damage, it is important to treat this condition as early as possible. Dogs on high fat diets, as well as those fed on table scraps are more susceptible to this disease.

## Symptoms Include:

- Lack of appetite
- Hunched up posture with shoulders forward and head bent down.
- Diarrhea
- Depression
- Vomiting and nausea
- Swollen abdomen
- Fever
- Color of stool changes to odd yellow

## Treatment:

The goal of treatment is to rest the pancreas, provide supportive care and control complications. Treatment usually begins with withholding food, water, and oral medications for at least 24 hours. The lack of oral intake stops the stimulation of the pancreas to produce digestive enzymes. Your pet will be put on IV fluids, antibiotics and anti-nausea medications.

Ideally we want to see no vomiting or diarrhea for at least 48-72 hours. If the pet shows improvement, then food is slowly reintroduced and again monitored for another day before a decision is made when it can be sent home. The dog may need to stay on a special diet for life, or it may be possible to gradually reintroduce the former diet. High-fat diets or treats should be avoided.

If the pancreatitis was caused by a medication, the medication should be stopped. If it was caused by a toxin, infection, or other condition, the appropriate therapy for the underlying condition should be started.

In rare instances where there are intestinal complications or the development of a pancreatic abscess, surgery may be necessary.

## Additional Complications:

Pancreatitis can be a very unpredictable disease. In most cases, if the pancreatitis was mild and the pet only had one episode, chances of recovery are good and avoiding high fat foods may be all that is necessary to prevent recurrence or complications. In other cases, what appears to be a mild case may progress, or may be treated successfully only to have recurrences, sometimes severe.

Dogs with severe pancreatitis can recover, but may also develop fatal complications. The risk of developing fatal pancreatitis is increased in dogs who are overweight, or have diabetes mellitus, hyperadrenocorticism, hypothyroidism, gastrointestinal tract disease, and epilepsy. Pets who have repeated bouts of pancreatitis may need to be fed low-fat diets to prevent recurrence. Even so, some animals develop chronic pancreatitis, which can lead to diabetes mellitus and/or pancreatic insufficiency, also called 'maldigestion syndrome.'

In pancreatic insufficiency, the nutrients in food are passed out in the feces undigested. An animal with this disease often has a ravenous appetite, diarrhea, and weight loss. Even though he is eating, he could literally starve to death. Treatment for pancreatic insufficiency is lifelong but is possible. The pet's digestive enzymes are replaced through a product processed from pancreases of hogs and cattle which contain large quantities of the digestive enzymes. A change in diet with added nutritional supplements may also be necessary.