



## Epilepsy

Epilepsy is a disturbance in brain function which results in seizure activity. The condition can be the result of other disease processes going on in the brain or epilepsy can be the primary disease process. The latter is more common and it is not something which can be cured which is why dogs will often require lifelong medication. The goal is to manage the disease as best as possible, although it is important for owners to be aware that even in the best case scenario, the occasional seizure will still be likely to occur.

The medication which we most commonly use to control seizures is called 'phenobarbitone'. It is a tablet which must be given by mouth every morning and night. The main side effects of the drug include drowsiness, increase in hunger and an increase in drinking and urination. For most patients the drowsiness tends to resolve once the animal becomes used to the medication which usually takes about 10 days. Other more serious side effects are possible but uncommon.

Once your pet has commenced therapy with phenobarbitone, it **must not** be stopped as doing so may precipitate severe seizure activity. In addition, owners must be committed to managing this disease as **missing even a single dose can trigger seizure activity**.

Two to four weeks after starting therapy, we will need to do a blood test to ensure we are using the best possible dose and to ensure that the drug is not having any major ill effects. Thereafter, we will need to collect a blood sample every six to 12 months for on-going monitoring. Some animals become more tolerant of the drug over time so we may need to alter the dose or even add another type of medication in order to effectively control seizure activity.

Most epileptic dogs can maintain a very good quality of life if their owners and vets work together to ensure that their treatment plan is well managed. Keeping a seizure diary is a good way to keep track of the disease and may provide your vet with pertinent information for ongoing care. Remember that stopping anti-epileptic drugs suddenly is dangerous and that most animals will require daily medication for life. **Please contact us immediately if your dog is having clusters of seizures, has a single seizure lasting more than five minutes or is showing any other signs of being unwell.**