



Canine Diabetes

Diabetes is a relatively common disease in dogs which, in its most common form, is very similar to insulin dependent diabetes in humans. Most diabetic dogs will therefore require twice daily insulin injections for life.

Causes:

The precise cause of canine diabetes is poorly understood. There is a small organ which sits alongside the stomach called the pancreas which is responsible for secreting insulin in healthy animals. If this organ becomes diseased for any reason, diabetes can result. It is believed that for some animals, there is a genetic component to diabetes. Middle aged female dogs tend to be most commonly effected, but any dog has the potential to develop diabetes.

Symptoms:

Early symptoms include weight loss, an increase in water consumption, an increase in frequency of urination, and an increase in appetite. Without medication your dog may go off its food, become lethargic, and he or she may begin to vomit. This can progress to a more complicated life-threatening condition where your dog becomes very unwell.

Cataracts (white discoloration of the eyes and loss of vision) and recurrent skin and bladder infections are also possible consequences of canine diabetes.

Diagnosis:

A complete physical examination followed by analysis of your pets blood and urine are required to diagnose diabetes.

Treatment:

Insulin therapy – Your pet will require twice daily insulin injections under the skin for life. It is essential that your pet is fed just prior to each injection. Your veterinarian &/or veterinary nurses will be happy to show you how to give the injections to ensure both you and your pet will have stress free therapy.

In the case of an insulin overdose or failure to eat, your pet's blood sugar levels may drop to a dangerous level. The signs to watch out for include weakness, disorientation, behavioural change, staggering & collapse. If this happens, apply honey directly to the gums or administer a sugar liquid and seek veterinary attention as soon as possible.

Diet – Instituting a routine is critical in ensuring the health of diabetic dogs. This involves feeding the same amount and type of food at the same time each day. Diets which are high in complex carbohydrates (low GI) whilst being low in fat are the most effective and can help to reduce the amount of insulin required. Some examples of diets designed to cater to diabetic dogs include *Hills w/d* & *Royal Canin weight control* diabetic biscuits. If your pet is a fussy eater, speak to us about other diets which may be appropriate.

Avoid giving treats & leaving food out during the day as this effects blood sugar levels and results in poor control of the diabetes.

Exercise – Again, routine is critical. It is important that your dog has the same level of activity at the same time & for the same duration each day. Hard strenuous exercise should be avoided as this can cause a decrease in blood sugar levels.

Prognosis:

The prognosis depends on many factors. These include owner commitment, ease of glucose regulation & the presence of other diseases. Sterilization of female dogs is vital to ensure good stabilization as sex hormones interfere with the action of insulin. In addition you will need to ensure your pet has good dental health and seek prompt veterinary attention for any injuries or signs of being unwell. With good maintenance of the condition & regular evaluations by your veterinarian, many diabetic dogs will live a long, happy, and healthy life.

If you have any other questions or concerns about this disease or your pet's health in general, please contact the friendly staff at Port Kennedy Veterinary Hospital.

Commonly Asked Questions

Q I forgot to give insulin or I'm not sure if it went in. What should I do?

A Nothing! Do not attempt to give the dose again. Give the next dose as normal at the ordinary time.

Q The dose was accidentally given twice, so my pet has had a double dose. What should I do?

A Feed them something sugary, and avoid exercise for the day. Monitor closely and contact us if you have any concerns.

Q I accidentally gave ten times the normal amount as I had the decimal place in the wrong spot. Should I be concerned?

A YES! Feed your pet something sugary, and call to advise us that you are on your way to the clinic with your pet. If they won't take sugary food, rub some honey or sugar onto their gums or the inside of their cheek. Bring your pet to the Veterinary Hospital immediately so that we can provide the care which they require.

Q I left the insulin bottle on the counter, or accidentally placed it in the freezer instead of the fridge. Does it really matter if the temperature was not right for a short period of time?

A Unfortunately yes, insulin is very temperature sensitive. If you've forgotten to return the bottle to the fridge, or if you have accidentally placed the bottle in the freezer, you should discard it and collect another bottle from the clinic.

Q My pet vomited after their injection, or they are not interested in their usual meal. What should I do?

A If your pet has vomited after the injection, try to encourage them to have another meal. If they are not interested rub sugar or honey on the gums or cheek, avoid exercise and ring the clinic for veterinary advice. If your pet is not interested in their usual meal, this should also be discussed with the veterinarian as maintaining a balance between nutrition and medication is vital with diabetic patients.

Q My animal is coming in for surgery and I have been asked to fast them. Does it matter that my pet is a diabetic?

A Yes. Make sure the clinic where the procedure is being done is aware that your pet is a diabetic. The clinic staff will then provide you with specific instructions to prepare your pet for the procedure.