

## Introduction

Pancreatitis is a painful and serious condition that can occur very suddenly. The cause is unknown but it is seen more frequently in middle-aged dogs, possibly more in females than males, that are overweight and often follows a high fat meal or garbage eating with a high content of rancid fats.

## What is pancreatitis?

The pancreas is attached to the upper small intestine and one of its major functions is to secrete digestive enzymes and other substances required for digestion. Pancreatitis refers to inflammation of the pancreas, and is associated with activated digestive enzymes that result in injury to the pancreas and sometimes adjacent organs within the abdomen.

The cause is unknown but it is seen more frequently in middle-aged to older dogs that are obese and female. Ingestion of a fatty meal has always been suspected as a trigger of this disorder. Medication with cortisone is sometimes implicated.

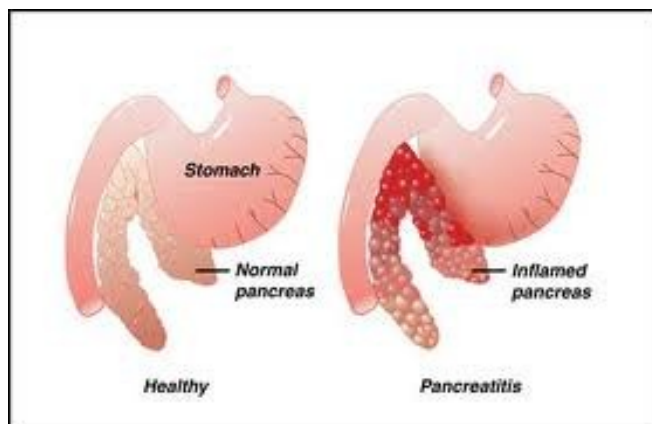
## How is pancreatitis diagnosed?

The signs of pancreatitis include vomiting, abdominal pain, fever, and diarrhoea. If the attack is severe; shock, acute kidney failure, respiratory failure, haemorrhagic diarrhoea and death may occur. Mild cases may display depression, anorexia with vague abdominal pain.

Blood tests are taken that may indicate the diagnosis of pancreatitis, and urine samples may be analysed. X-rays may indicate a problem in the vicinity of the pancreas, although ultrasound is a more reliable way of diagnosing pancreatitis. Unfortunately, some dogs with pancreatitis will elude detection with any of these tests and consequently the diagnosis may be tentative in some cases.

## How is pancreatitis treated?

Most cases are treated by withholding oral food and water, accompanied by intravenous fluids to maintain normal fluid and electrolyte balance. Antibiotics, anti-inflammatories, antiemetics (to reduce vomiting) and painkillers may be required. If shock is present other treatments may be indicated. Unfortunately, dogs that present with shock may die despite aggressive treatment.



When there is no more vomiting, the dog is offered small amounts of fluids and if this is not vomited, small amounts of a low fat, low protein diet. Some dogs require hospitalization for days before they are ready to be sent home.

## Will there be any long-term problems?

Some dogs continue to have recurrent bouts of the disease, known as chronic, relapsing pancreatitis. These dogs often require a medical diet to reduce the rate of recurrence.

If a significant number of pancreatic cells are destroyed, insufficient digestive enzymes may be produced leading to digestion problems. These dogs require medication with every meal to avoid diarrhoea and weight loss.

The pancreas is also the site of insulin production. If enough of these cells are destroyed, the dog may develop diabetes and require insulin injections. However, most dogs recover with no long-term effects.

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Editor: Dr Julia Adams BVSc Contributor: Dr Rebecca Bragg BVSc

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