

HOW TO RECOGNIZE A SICK DOG?

A sick dog cannot complain about his symptoms the same way a human can. He won't whine or bark in pain, he won't hold his head between his paws to relieve a headache or on his belly to relieve an abdominal cramp. It is for us to know how to read his body language and behaviour changes to detect sickness in our dog.

Here are some sign your dog can show when he is sick:

Waking up is longer in the morning, not in a hurry to say hello. Lying down more than usual, skips one or more meals, picky appetite, indifference to his environment, does not do his usual little dance when you come back from work, urinates or defecates at unusual places, drinks a lot or not at all, urinates a lot or very little, loses weight, gains weight abnormally, pants when exercising, coughs, scratches compulsively, rubs his eyes, etc.

A dog in pain will take a position that will relieve him of his pain.

When should you consult your veterinarian with your puppy?

For a puppy less than 4 months:

Diarrhea or vomiting with blood, weariness that lasts more than 2 hours, skipping his 2 meals of the day.

If he does effort to vomit but nothing comes out for more than 4 hours.

If he has diarrhea more than 4 times during the day.

If he skips two consecutive meals.

If he shakes his head and scratches his ears.

If his respiratory frequency is elevated but he is not hot.

***** Young animals are like babies, they are more fragile because their immune system is not fully developed yet and they don't have the reserves to face a few days of weakness.**

He is not eating?

Not eating is a sign of illness from your animal.

Causes are numerous, and you must start by eliminating as much causes as possible, for example indigestion, change in diet, intense heat, stress, transient discomfort, etc.

What to do if my dog is not eating? Anorexia

A toy breed puppy cannot afford to skip a meal because his liver is not mature yet so he is predisposed to a hypoglycemic episode. If he skips a meal, you have to give him some sugar like corn syrup, honey or maple syrup. For other breeds, wait after the second skipped meal. If he is still not eating and does not defecate, call your veterinarian to have some information, it may be for a benign reason. A technician will be able to instruct you.

VOMITING

Vomiting is a natural body reflex. A dog can vomit to free his body from something that indisposes him. Vomiting can become a problem if it **continues** during the day or the next day. For a miniature breed puppy, remember that he cannot be fasting all day, so any incessant vomiting should automatically lead you to your veterinarian. (Don't forget to give him sugar before you go to your veterinarian.)

The CAUSES of vomiting are numerous and may have the following origins:

Digestive: Examples of gastric digestive causes: Going through the trash, indigestion, blockage by a foreign object, viral, bacterial, parasitical or immune gastritis, tumors, etc.

Extra digestive: Pancreatitis, Hepatitis, Renal, adrenal gland disorder, diabetes, tumor, uterus infection, etc.

A thorough exam by a veterinarian is essential and sometimes, tests like x-rays, blood tests can be useful to determine the exact causes.

DIARRHEA

Diarrhea is also a bodily reflex that can be a problem if it lasts more than a day or two.

Causes of diarrhea can also be digestive like a food, bacterial, viral or immune related enteritis. It can also be extra digestive just like vomiting.

Blood in stool or vomiting blood

We can find blood in vomit or stools following:

-) A gastro-enteritis which caused irritation to stomach or intestine.
-) Presence of a foreign object.
-) Parvovirus
-) Gastric ulcer
-) Bleeding following intoxication by rodenticides and anti-inflammatories.
-) Immune disease that attacks blood platelets
-) Tumor. Etc...

SKIN PROBLEMS

Shedding

Possible causes are: Excessive scratching, moult, a diet deficient in omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins or micronutrients, hormonal like hypothyroid, hypo-oestrogenemy.

Scratching

A scratching dog always has inflammation on his skin at more or less advanced degree.

Possible causes are: deficiencies already enumerated for shedding, other diseases like allergies to the environment (atopy), food related or seasonal, parasite infestation (fleas, demodex, cheyletiellosis, lice, scabies, etc.). There are also endocrinal diseases (impairment of the adrenal or thyroid glands). A thorough veterinary exam and lab tests are necessary to determine the causes.

Shakes and scratch ears

Possible causes are: external or medium primary otitis caused by bacteria or fungus or secondary to an allergy, hypothyroid, hereditary diseases or ear mites. Humidity, ear-wax accumulation, a heap of hair, debris or foreign objects are predisposing factors for ear infection.

Hematoma in the ear flap

Cause: Blood accumulated in the ear flap when your dog shakes his head vigorously, scratches or knocks his ear, after and infection or parasite presence. Treatment is generally surgical.

RESPIRATORY PROBLEMS

Coughing and choking

Example: My Yorkshire clears her throat, does pig sounds, chokes and her chest contracts. I noticed these symptoms especially after excitement or during a walk when she pulls on her leash. My veterinarian diagnosed a collapsed trachea (Narrowing of the tracheal rings in small breeds like poodles and Chihuahuas).

JOINT/BONE PROBLEMS

Limping

Panosteitis: A medium or large breed puppy can show signs of this growth disease. This is a limp which moves a leg to the other. Treatment with anti-inflammatory and patience will end this.

Hip dysplasia: It is a hereditary disease that usually touches medium large and giant breeds. Limping gets worse throughout the dog's growth. Treatment aims to get the animal comfortable but does not heal him.

Necrosis of femoral head: It generally affects small breeds. Treat consists in removing the femoral head.

Desiccant osteochondrosis: It is a joint cartilage disorder that can cause limping. Only surgery can treat definitely this type of problem.

Luxating patella: For small breeds, we often see a deformation at the knee which causes a luxating patella that will lead to a sporadic limp that will become permanent. The treatment consists in correcting the knee deformation by transposition of the tibia crest.

Anterior cruciate ligament rupture: can occur after a trauma or a progressive degeneration of the ligament. Being overweight can be a predisposing factor. The treatment is surgical, many techniques are possible, but the all have one goal in common: stabilizing the knee joint and restarting the dog's normal activity.

Immune related arthritis is sometime disputed. **Lyme disease** can cause weakness and arthritis. Bone tumors like **osteosarcoma** are one of the causes of limping in medium and especially large breeds.

BACK PAIN

At the beginning of the disease, the dog doesn't move a lot to alleviate sharp back pain and if it's not treated, it can lead to paresis and paralysis and cause irreversible damage to the spine. Obesity and a lack of exercise could predispose the animal to develop a **discal hernia**.

The treatment can be medical or surgical according to the severity of the lesion. The dachshund, often called "wiener dog", is especially predisposed to this kind of problem.

RED EYE, RUBBING AND HAS DISCHARGE.

Conjunctivitis can be caused by an infection, allergies, foreign objects or an insufficient tear production.

Keratoconjunctivitis sicca (KCS) is caused by an insufficient tear production and causes dry eyes. Some breeds are predisposed.

A **corneal ulcer** is a lesion on the cornea that occurs when it is scratched by a foreign object or damaged by an insufficient tear production, a bacterial infection or presence of entropion (a malformation of the eyelid that causes the lashes to rub the cornea). Corneal ulcer is very painful and can lead to the dog closing his eye. Dogs with bulging eyes and older dogs are more prone to corneal ulcers.

Epiphora is runny eyes; it may mean that his tear ducts are blocked.

Cataract and glaucoma: Deformation of the crystalline, an organ situated in the eye. It is the most seen cause of cecity in dogs. Since this disease is hereditary in certain breeds, it is important to have your dog examined by a veterinarian at a young age because animal with these problems should not be used for reproduction.

DRINKS AND URINE A LOT

Drinking and urinating at abnormal frequencies can be due to diabetes, renal insufficiency, hepatic insufficiency, endocrine disease like hyperadrenocorticism, a tumor like a lymphoma or sometimes psychogenic with behaviour problems. Laboratory tests will precise the diagnostic.

Blood in urine: We can expect stones or crystals in the bladder, a **bladder infection**, a **coagulation** problem, **intoxication to rodenticides**. The veterinarian needs to pass some tests to your dog to give a good diagnostic.

LOSS OF CONSCIENCE OR CONVULSIONS

Several causes can be the reason for loss of conscience in a dog and they are not necessarily convulsions or epilepsy.

Syncope and heart failure: An 8 years old poodle gets excited, he falls on his side, loses conscience, it only lasts a couple of seconds and he quickly comes back to normal.

Trachea collapses: A pug his taking a walk outside during a hot day, he was already snoring but it gets worse, he snores more and more and has trouble breathing, then he loses conscience.

Vestibular syndrome: A 5 years old pug had his head tilted since this morning, when I came back home, he was trying to come and see me but could not keep his balance, he fell and was turning from left to right.

Hepatoencephalopathy: A 3 months old miniature Yorkshire, smaller than his brother and two sisters, after his meals, he starts to salivate and shakes a little bit and he falls on his side, he is very weak, as if he was in **hypoglycemia**, he panics and his owner also, she shakes him up a bit a gives him some honey and hop! He gains back his conscience. After an exam with a veterinarian, it happens to be a congenital malformation in the hepatic ducts and the signs resemble **hypoglycemia in miniature breeds**.

Epilepsy: It was very impressive when my German shepherd had a seizure. It all lasted only 5 minutes, but it seemed to last hours. I heard a noise in the kitchen, I ran to it and I found my dog lying on the ground "pedaling" with his four paws and his whole body was shaking. He seemed all tense and saliva was coming out of his mouth. His jaw was stiff and even his eyes were red! I tried to reassure him the best I could while holding his head in my hands to avoid him for banging it on the floor or the wall. After a couple of minutes, he finally stopped shaking and he looked very confused and disoriented. There was stool and urine everywhere on the floor around him. He completely regained his conscience after 2 or 3 minutes and started to walk normally again after about 10 minutes. My veterinarian suspected a convulsion attack which is typical of epilepsy cases. An attack can be focalized, which means it is localised to one part of the body, or generalized to the whole body.

Seizures are divided in phases:

Prodrome: Minutes or hours before the attack. He will be more affectionate or on the contrary he will hide because he feels that something is coming.

Aura: Last a couple of seconds or minutes (compulsive licking, restless walking, salivation, vomiting, barking for no reason, in brief a change in his normal state.)

Ictus: It is the real seizure, it is what you see (lasts a couple of second to 3-5 minutes)

Post-ictal: The awakening, made in confusion and disorientation because of the exhaustion, can last a couple of minutes to a couple of hours.

Epilepsy is a state where the seizures are repeated in a certain period of time, months or years. The veterinarian will do a thorough exam to determine if they are convulsions or syncope?

The veterinarian will treat your animal only if he has more than one attack at a close interval (less than one month), if he has aggressive attacks that last more than 10 minutes with difficulty to recuperate or if he has two consecutive attacks without any recuperation. In these cases, your dog will receive an emergency treatment. The treatment will depend on his blood test and the cause of his seizures or loss of conscience. The treatment for epilepsy consists in giving medication orally every day for all his life to reduce the frequency of the attacks.

INTOXICATIONS

Intoxication by contact: Rinse generously with water before the toxins are absorbed.

Intoxication by ingestion: It is recommended to call the veterinary clinic for information. Do not induce vomiting without knowing the power of the toxin. The list is long

Here is a list of the majority of toxic products:

- ✚ Anti-parasite collars
- ✚ Anticoagulants (rodenticides)
- ✚ Ethylene glycol (antifreeze et cooling liquid)
- ✚ Lead (car batteries, accumulators, antirust products, paint, grease and motor oil)
- ✚ Acetaminophen (Toxic dose for cats: 50 mg/kg; for dogs: 150 mg/kg)
- ✚ Aspirin (Toxic dose for cats: 50 mg/kg)
- ✚ Ibuprofen
- ✚ Motrin
- ✚ Paracetamol (Toxic dose for cats: 50 mg/kg, which is 1 250 mg caplet for a 5 kg cat. For dogs the toxic dose is 100-200 mg/kg)

Household intoxications

DO NOT INDUCE VOMITING! DO NOT GIVE WATER!

Detergent: Soap, shampoos, household cleaners, dishwashing liquid.

Caustic product: Anti rust, stripper, disinfectant, laundry detergent, battery liquid, cyanoacrylate glue, shoe polish, bleach, 10% peroxide, deodorising blocs for toilets, matches, pesticides, etc.

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory: Aspirin, Phenylbutazon, Ketoprofen, Ibuprofen, Meloxicam, Carprofen, Celebrex, etc.

Food intoxication

INDUCE VOMITING AFTER INGESTION IF POSSIBLE!

Chocolate (theobromine): Toxic dose 100-300 mg/kg. Lethal dose: 500-1000 mg/kg, which is 15-30g of dark chocolate by kg of weight or 100-250 g of milk chocolate by kg. Signs are neurological, digestive, cardio-respiratory, urinary and death.

Intoxication by plants

INDUCE VOMITING AFTER INGESTION IF POSSIBLE!

All plants contain cellulose non digestible by animals, even if they are not noted as toxic, they can cause digestive disorder signs.

Here is a summary list of vegetal to avoid:

- ✚ Onion and garlic (toxic dose: 5-10g/kg)
- ✚ Grapes (toxic dose : 10 g/kg so 100 g can kill a 10 kg dog)
- ✚ Aroids (philodendron, dieffenbachia, etc.)
- ✚ Leaves, stems and roots are toxic, tulip and hyacinth, lily of the valley, apple of love, potatoes, ficus and mushrooms, etc.

Animal intoxication

Hymenopter (wasps, bees and some ants): 20 wasps can kill a 5 kg dog

Toads secrete toxin from the skin: cardiac symptoms, convulsions, paralysis, digestive symptoms or ocular problems.

OBESITY

An obese animal is more predisposed to joint problems, sensible to anesthesia and other organ problems. Give him a quality diet and ration his meals, also include the treats you give him in your ration. After spaying or neutering, his metabolism functions slower, this predisposes him to obesity. In certain cases we have to reduce ration up to 30% less. Exercise will also put your dog more in shape and relaxed. **Animo-Vet Animal Hospital** has a weight loss program with regular follow-up visits and it is *free!*

OLDER DOG

Older dogs being less active, it is mandatory to rectify his diet to reduce calorie intake. Weight loss will relieve tension on his joint and reduce the risk for cardiac failure, kidney or liver disease, digestive problems and even more. You also need to increase fiber, fatty acids and vitamin intake and reduce sodium, protein and fat in his diet.

Arthritis will manifest by a mild stiffness but for others they will be totally invalid. You can have your dog follow an exercise program adapted to his state that will allow him to maintain muscle tone. Arthritic pain can be relieved with anti-inflammatories. Your veterinarian will prescribe the necessary medication.

Teeth loss and cavities in addition to making chewing difficult, it increases the risks of infection and tumors. Brushing the teeth and giving an anti-tartar food will help reduce the risk of these problems to the minimum in your dog.

Prostate hypertrophy and mammary tumors happen especially in males and females that have not been neutered or spayed. Ask your vet to check your animal's prostate or mammary gland during the medical exam.

Separation anxiety often happens in older dogs unable to take the stress. It manifests itself by aggressive behaviour, noise phobia, barking, whining or restless sleep. This state can be treated with the help of medication associated with a behaviour modification technique.

Skin or coat problems with age, skin loses its elasticity which makes your pet more susceptible to injuries. His coat gets thinner and tarnishes. A more frequent grooming and administration of fatty acid supplements can be extremely beneficial.

Deafness is generally an old animal problem. It can, however, happen after a trauma, exposition to a very intense noise or an infection; it can also be hereditary or congenital. Unfortunately, once deafness is diagnosed it is too late to do anything for your dog.

Cognitive dysfunction manifests with disorientation, confusion or activity decrease. Medication can help control some problems.