

POOP HAPPENS

When to Worry About Your Dog's Diarrhea

It's not a topic anyone likes to discuss, but if you own a dog, chances are you have found yourself cleaning up a stinky brown puddle more than you'd care to think about. However, keeping an eye on our dog's stools is an important way we monitor his or her health. While we usually can't predict the onset, as owners we need to become familiar with the different types of stools and learn the possible causes to help our vets pinpoint the problem.

It's important to know that diarrhea is not a disease, but rather a symptom of a variety of concerns. Common reasons for diarrhea can include intestinal infections from bacteria, viruses, parasites, and more. Another cause of an upset stomach is the consumption of inappropriate items, such as garbage, household materials or human food that is not suitable for dogs. Other mentions include stress caused by changes in their environment, switching foods, illnesses, and allergies.

Acute Diarrhea can usually be treated at home. The common suggestion would be to withhold food for 12 to 24 hours—to allow the intestinal tract to rest, and provide water to ensure your pup is adequately hydrated. Small, bland meals should then be given to allow your pup's sensitive tummy to ease back into solid foods. A bland diet is easily prepared by boiling unseasoned chicken breast with plain white rice (NO BONE, NO SKIN). Drain off any residual fat after cooking; don't add salt or seasoning. Feed your dog the bland diet until the next day. If the diarrhea begins to improve, your dog has a good appetite, and there's no vomiting, you can start to gradually add your dog's normal food to the bland diet mixture. Call your vet if diarrhea continues for more than 24 hours.

If your dog is still eating and drinking, that's a good sign. **Never** give over-the-counter or prescription medications without your vet's advice. As always, check with your vet before doing any at home treatments because some dogs don't need fasting - and doing so could cause more issues, especially if the diarrhea is not acute and followed by vomiting.

If diarrhea happens more frequently and for an extended period, it may be a sign of a more serious underlying cause. If your pet experiences lethargy, vomiting, weakness or other symptoms, in addition to continuing stomach issues, then it may be time to call your vet.

Chronic Diarrhea can mean disorders such as inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), kidney/liver concerns, cancers, or food intolerances. Always defer to your vet to properly diagnose these concerns so that they can be accurately treated.

If your dog has diarrhea, try to collect a sample to take to your vet later. Make a note of the stool's consistency and color. Is it watery? Pudding-like? Formed but soft? Is there blood present? Mucus? Is it black and/or tarry? Do you see pieces of toys, clothing, or other inedible material in it? Color can indicate a lot about what is going on inside your dog's gut. Chocolate brown is normal, while colors like orange, green, or gray may signify issues with such organs as liver, gall bladder, or pancreas. Black tarry stool is very serious, and may point to internal bleeding. If you see this, contact your vet as soon as possible.

While monitoring your pet at home, make sure to keep track of what they ate before the diarrhea occurred:

- Did they ingest anything non-food related or an item that could upset their stomach?
- How much water did they consume?
- What have their bowel movements been like (consistency and color)?
- How often do they happen?

-If you have multiple dogs, be sure to check and see if they all have the same symptoms.

When it comes to your dog's poop, it takes some investigative work to see what their bodies are trying to tell you. Be mindful of what your dog is eating, the regularity of their bowel movements - and how their diet and lifestyle affect their overall health. While some cases of diarrhea may be resolved in a few days, others may require regular management throughout your pet's lifetime.

WHEN TO CALL A VET ASAP

If any of the following circumstances apply, contact your vet immediately:

- Episodes of diarrhea are frequently repeated over several hours.
- Your dog shows extreme lethargy or lack of responsiveness.
- You suspect your dog has ingested a toxin.
- You see excessive amounts of blood in the stool.
- Stool is black and/or has a tarry appearance.
- Your dog is on medication that may cause diarrhea (stop giving the medication and call your vet).
- You suspect your dog ingested a foreign body, such as a toy or clothing.
- Your dog's gums are pale, white, bluish, or gray in color.
- Your dog's abdomen seems painful and/or distended.
- You see worms in the stool (not an emergency, but a dewormer will be needed).
- Diarrhea occurs for more than 24 hours.

RANK	EXAMPLES	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
1	 CONSTIPATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very hard and dry • Often looks like pellets • Takes a lot of effort to get out • Leaves no residue when picked up
2	 NORMAL STOOL FOR RAW FED DOG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firm, but not hard • Segmented sections • Hardly any residue when picked up
3	 NORMAL STOOL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Log shaped, wet surface • Little to no segmentation • Leaves residue but holds firm when picked up
4	 SOFT STOOL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soggy • Log shaped • Leaves residue and loses form when picked up
5	 SOFT STOOL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very wet distinct shape • Looks like a pile instead of a log • Leaves residue when picked up
6	 LOOSE STOOL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has texture • No distinct shape • Leaves residue when picked up
7	 LOOSE STOOL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watery • No texture • Looks like a puddle • Can't be picked up easily