

# What You Need to Know When Your Dog Vomits

Gastritis - or inflammation of the gastrointestinal lining - can be either short-term, or acute, or chronic, lasting more than seven days. So, what causes both forms and what should you do when vomiting occurs? Know when to call your vet and how to help your dog feel better fast.

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## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Gastritis is inflammation of the gastrointestinal (GI) lining, and the condition can be acute and self-resolving, or chronic
- Acute gastritis in dogs is far more common than the chronic form, and in many cases can pass so quickly a pet parent may not even know their dog was ill
- The classic symptom of both forms of gastritis is vomiting, but when the condition is chronic, there will be several other symptoms as well; untreated chronic gastritis can cause serious damage to the intestinal tract
- There are different forms of chronic gastritis; successful treatment involves identifying both the specific form, and the underlying cause

Gastritis is the medical term for inflammation of the gastrointestinal (GI) lining. There are two main forms of gastritis in dogs — acute or chronic.

## Acute Gastritis

Acute gastritis is far more common and can pass so quickly (often in less than 24 hours) that you may not even realize your dog was sick. But even if it lasts up to a week, it's still considered an acute episode. It can be difficult to determine the cause of acute gastritis because so many dogs return to normal before any testing is done.

Many things can trigger a bout of acute gastritis in canine family members, including chewing up toys, sampling items from the garbage, the introduction of a new medication (anti-inflammatory medications, both steroidal and nonsteroidal are common causes), or an abrupt change in food.

## Helping a Dog With Acute Gastritis Feel Better, Faster

Withhold food (but never water) for 24 to 48 hours. If your dog can't hold down water, consult your veterinarian about subcutaneous fluids you can give at home, along with anti-vomiting medications. During this time, several soothing substances, including inner leaf aloe juice, manuka honey, colostrum, and slippery elm can all help support the irritated lining of the stomach and reduce the likelihood of ulcers forming.

After 24 hours without vomiting, offer your dog a bland, easily digestible diet including foods such as canned or steamed 100% pumpkin and cooked ground turkey. Ginger, turmeric, and chamomile have also been studied for their stomach-soothing benefits and can be added to a bland diet to help reduce inflammation.

Once your pup is back to normal, resume feeding his regular diet at half the normal quantity per day, divided into 4 to 6 meals, then slowly increase the amount of food in fewer servings over the next few days.

## Chronic Gastritis

Chronic gastritis, the more serious form and typically seen more often in cats than dogs, often involves vomiting once or twice a day, along with other symptoms as listed below. If chronic gastritis is left untreated, it can cause serious damage to the intestinal tract. Other symptoms seen in dogs with chronic gastritis include:

- Diarrhea
- Electrolyte imbalance
- Bleeding from the intestinal tract (look for black tarry stool or “coffee grounds” vomit)
- Lethargy, weakness
- Abdominal pain and cramping
- Retching, nausea, drooling
- Fever
- Decreased appetite and weight loss
- Dehydration
- Poor hair coat

There are three forms of chronic gastritis in dogs:

- Chronic atrophic gastritis, which is rare and results in a reduction in the size or number of glands in the stomach. This form of the illness develops secondary to an immune disorder and is most often seen in the Norwegian Lundehund breed.
- Chronic hypertrophic gastritis, which is a thickening of tissues within the stomach. The underlying cause of this form hasn't been identified, but it's thought to be a congenital (present at birth) disorder linked to the release of histamines. Chronic hypertrophic gastritis is more common in males, along with older, smaller breed dogs.
- Chronic eosinophilic gastritis is a blood disorder characterized by an abnormal number of a certain type of white blood cells in the tissues of the stomach. This condition is most often seen in dogs under 5 years of age and predisposed breeds (German Shepherds, Rottweilers, and Shar-peis).

Like the acute form of the illness, chronic gastritis can also be related to something in your dog's diet including food allergies, a reaction to an ingredient, or a medication or supplement given regularly. It can also be present along with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), other systemic diseases such as kidney or liver disease, gallbladder or bile dysfunction, helicobacter infections and microbiome imbalances, and parasites.

Chronic gastritis can lead to the lower esophageal sphincter not fully closing, allowing stomach acid into the esophagus creating reflux, or GERD (gastroesophageal reflux disease). Integrative vets use a variety of nontoxic remedies to address GERD, including digestive enzymes with ox bile, deglycyrrhizinated licorice root (DGL) and digestive bitters, in addition to fixing underlying dysbiosis.

## Diagnosing Gastritis in Dogs

If your dog has gastritis symptoms lasting a week or longer, it's important to make an appointment with your integrative veterinarian to check for the presence of chronic gastritis and/or other illnesses.

Your vet can confirm gastritis with blood tests, urinalysis, fecal and microbiome tests, abdominal X-rays, abdominal ultrasound, or endoscopy. More often than not, a definitive diagnosis involves multiple steps and significant testing to rule other disorders either in or out.

These tests will give your veterinarian a more comprehensive view of what is occurring at the level of the problem (usually the stomach) and to sample the tissue for more information.

## Treatment Options for Chronic Gastritis

Conventional medical treatment typically involves multiple medications to control symptoms, such as anti-nausea and anti-ulcer drugs, protectants, and antacids. Proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) are often prescribed to reduce stomach acid, but these meds are linked to increased risk of kidney disease, osteoporosis, pneumonia, stroke, and bacterial infections,<sup>1</sup> so they should only be used for very short periods of time while underlying causes are being identified.

It's extremely important that your veterinarian discovers the root cause of your dog's chronic gastritis so that together you can address it — not just the symptoms. Short courses of pharmaceuticals may be necessary for symptom reduction, but fully resolving or successfully managing the underlying cause of the condition should always be the goal.

Critically evaluating the quality and level of adulteration of every ingredient in your dog's diet should also be a part of the initial evaluation.

## Sources and References

[PetMD, February 3, 2022](#)

<sup>1</sup> [Dogs Naturally Magazine, December 17, 2022](#)

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