

This Strange 'Symphony' Can Signal Trouble, so Please Don't Ignore It

If you've ever heard these sounds from your dog, you may have wondered what's up with all that noise. And while it's usually par for the course, there are definitely signs of danger to watch out for. Here are 4 hints it's a serious problem.

Analysis by Dr. Karen Shaw Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- As with humans, dogs' stomachs sometimes grumble or gurgle. The noise is caused primarily by gas moving through the digestive tract
- Normal stomach noises in dogs aren't usually audible unless you're actively listening for them. If you can hear your dog's tummy growling from a distance away, he might be hungry, but more likely he's digesting food he just ate
- Some dogs swallow a lot of air, which can cause stomach gurgling, as can dietary indiscretion
- More serious causes of stomach and bowel noises include GI parasites, a foreign object in the GI tract and dysbiosis or another bowel or digestive disorder
- If your dog's stomach noise is occurring frequently or is accompanied by other symptoms (e.g., vomiting, appetite loss or lethargy), you should make an appointment with your veterinarian

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If you've ever actually heard your dog's digestive tract at work, you may have wondered what was up with all that gurgling.

As is the case with humans, some dogs have noisier stomachs and intestines than others, and while a digestive symphony may seem normal for your four-legged companion, it can also sometimes signal a problem.

Borborygmi: The Medical Term for Stomach Noise

The scientific term for stomach or bowel noises is borborygmi. What causes the noise is gas moving through the digestive tract.

Some amount of gas in your dog's intestines is normal. It's also normal for the intestines to experience rhythmic muscle contractions called peristalsis, which move things through the digestive tract.

Normal stomach gurgling is typically a soft sound interspersed with periods of silence, which is a sign that an ordinary amount of gas is moving through the digestive tract in an ordinary fashion.

Abnormally loud digestive sounds typically occur when the bowels contain large amounts of gas, peristalsis is increased, or both. There can be many causes for loud stomach gurgling — some are harmless, others are more serious. A few in each category follow.

Generally Benign Causes of Stomach Noise

- **Normal digestion and hunger** — If your otherwise healthy dog just ate a meal and his stomach gurgles a bit, it means his gastrointestinal tract has gone to work digesting his food.

When your dog is hungry, his stomach and intestines have little to work on in the way of food, so what's left is gas. If his digestive tract grows active as mealtime nears, you might hear some gurgling.

The solution, obviously, is to feed him — either his usual meal or a small snack to tide him over till mealtime.

- **Swallowing air** — Believe it or not, plain old oxygen can create stomach noise as well as burping in dogs who tend to ingest a lot of air. It can happen if your dog scarfs her meals or breathes heavily during exercise.

Air swallowing is generally harmless, but eating too fast can cause problems in some dogs. If your four-legged family member gobbles her meals, I recommend reading my [**10 tricks to slow your dog's dinnertime roll**](#).

- **Dietary indiscretion** — Dogs are known for indiscriminate snacking. It might be a piece of paper she snatches from the trash, a toy she chews through in a flash or leftovers she scores while counter surfing.

If this occurs, her GI tract will work overtime to try to break down the foreign object or food, which can cause loud tummy noises.

Depending on what your dog ate, her digestive upset can range from mild to life-threatening, especially if there's severe vomiting, diarrhea or an intestinal blockage.

If you know what she ate and you're concerned that it could be toxic or could lodge somewhere in her digestive tract, you should contact your veterinarian or an emergency animal hospital right away.

Potentially Serious Causes of Stomach Noise

- **Intestinal parasites** — These are the gross little creatures that take up residence inside your dog's gastrointestinal tract and cause a host of digestive and other issues. Common invaders include parasites such as giardia, coccidia and cryptosporidium, and worms (whipworms, tapeworms and hookworms).
- **Foreign bodies in the GI tract** — This is typically the result of dietary indiscretion, and involves items a dog ingests that don't pass easily through the digestive system, such as string, a toy, a leash, a sock, sticks, rocks, bones and other non-food objects.

Some foreign bodies, for example, certain pennies, can cause zinc toxicity. Others can cause local damage to a region of your dog's digestive tract.

- **Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)** — Inflammatory bowel disease is a condition in which the intestines are inflamed, meaning there are high numbers of inflammatory cells present in the lining of the digestive tract.

This inflammation causes structural changes in the mucosal lining, which results in dysfunctional digestion and interferes with the body's ability to break down and absorb nutrients from food.

- **Dysbiosis (leaky gut syndrome)** — An imbalance of gut bacteria, which means inadequate supplies of good bacteria, plus an overgrowth of bad bacteria, and sometimes yeast, can lead to inflammation of the membranes of the intestine, which results in the condition known as dysbiosis or leaky gut.

Causes of leaky gut in dogs include antibiotics, corticosteroids, NSAIDs (nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs), processed pet food, stress, toxin ingestion, vaccines and parasite infections.

When to Make an Appointment With Your Veterinarian

If your dog has occasional temporary stomach gurgling, there's probably no need for concern. For example, if it's first thing in the morning and he seems normal except for the gurgling, feed him his A.M. meal. If he eats with no problem and the noises stop, he's probably fine.

However, if your dog's digestive activity is easy to hear on a regular basis, as in, several times a week, or if there are other symptoms along with the tummy noises, such as a change in appetite, vomiting, diarrhea, excessive drooling, lethargy or signs of abdominal pain, you should make an appointment with your veterinarian as soon as possible.

If your dog is producing loud intestinal noises and seems sick, seek veterinary care immediately.

Evaluating Your Dog's Diet

A difficult-to-digest diet is one of the most common reasons for stomach and intestinal noises in animals. The food that is easiest for most healthy dogs to digest is a nutritionally balanced raw or gently cooked whole food diet.

In my experience, many digestive upsets, including tummy rumbling and gassiness, completely resolve once a dog is transitioned from a high-starch processed pet food to a balanced, species-appropriate, **non-GMO** and whole food diet containing no grains, potatoes or other starches and no chemical preservatives or additives.

All dry foods must contain starch to form the kibble, and starches can ferment to produce lots of GI gas, and in turn, lots of GI rumbling throughout the day. I recommend working with a holistic or integrative veterinarian to create a biologically appropriate diet and supplement protocol specifically suited to your individual dog's needs.

Sources and References

[PetMD](#)
