

## Diabetes Mellitus

Two forms of diabetes can be found in dogs. The first, Diabetes Mellitus, is the most common and will be the form discussed in this handout. The rarer form is called Diabetes Insipidus, which will not be covered here. Diabetes mellitus is caused by an excessive amount of sugar in your dog's blood and a deficiency of insulin, a hormone secreted by the pancreas. The exact causes of this are unknown, but diet, obesity, genetics, age and complications from other illnesses can all lead to diabetes. Certain breeds, such as Terriers, Cocker Spaniels, Dachshunds, and Poodles are more frequently affected.

So, how do you know whether or not your pet is developing diabetes? There are signs to look out for! If your pet is drinking an excessive amount of water, has an increased appetite, is urinating more often, and seems to be losing weight then your pet may be developing diabetes. Your veterinarian is able to test for this disease, which will be discussed later in this article. Before we discuss the treatment for this condition, let's discuss some preventive steps that can be taken to avoid it.

Once your dog has diabetes, this disease will be with them for the remainder of their life. Therefore, it is very important that we take steps to avoid this disease. Although diabetes can be acquired through genetics, which is difficult to avoid, the most common cause of the disease is obesity. It is very important that your dog gets regular exercise and is maintained on a well balanced diet. Your veterinarian can recommend a dog food that is right for your pet and make recommendations for an exercise regiment.

Your veterinarian will perform a simple blood test to measure the level of glucose (blood sugar) in your dog's blood. Multiple blood glucose tests are often necessary to establish a baseline. If your dog's blood glucose level returns high on the first test, this may have just resulted from a recent meal. If your veterinarian determines that your dog does have diabetes, he or she will want to perform regular blood glucose tests at the veterinary practice to monitor levels. Your veterinarian may also have you monitor your dog's blood glucose at home by sending you with an easy to use urine test kit.

Some mild cases of diabetes can be treated with a strict diet that is low in carbohydrates and high in protein. However, many cases will require your dog to be on insulin therapy. An oral form of insulin is available for humans, however, this is not effective in pets and an injectable form must be used. Your veterinarian will determine the proper type of insulin for your dog and the specific dose. This dose may be changed several times during the first few weeks of insulin therapy in order to properly regulate your pet's blood glucose levels.

A member of the veterinary staff will instruct you on how to administer an insulin injection, which is given subcutaneously (beneath the skin). It is very important to follow your veterinarian's exact dosage as an overdose of insulin can cause dangerously low blood sugars. If you ever feel that your pet has received too much insulin, you should contact your veterinarian or local emergency pet hospital if it is after hours. Corn syrup or honey can be given to quickly

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increase your dog's blood sugar levels if an overdose is suspected. Patients that have overdoses on insulin tend to become very lethargic, unsteady, develop shaking and convulsions can occur in severe cases.

If your dog is insulin-dependent, it is important that he receives a diet high in protein and low in carbohydrates. He should be fed at the same time everyday and insulin should be given at mealtimes as directed by your veterinarian. Maintaining a healthy weight is very important for the diabetic pet, so regular exercise is a must. Dogs that have been diagnosed with Diabetes Mellitus can be effectively treated with insulin therapy and can lead healthy, normal lives.

