

Parvovirus Infection in Dogs

General Information

Dogs become infected with parvovirus through contact with the stool of an infected dog or a contaminated environment. The virus is very hardy and remains infective in the environment for a long time. Puppies are most susceptible to parvovirus infections.

Parvovirus causes severe and often bloody vomiting and diarrhea. Infected animals rapidly dehydrate, and severe cases progress to shock and death. Fatalities occur mostly in puppies less than 12 weeks old.

Occasionally parvovirus attacks the heart muscle of puppies, usually 8 weeks of age or younger, and can cause sudden death.

A vaccine is available for prevention of canine parvovirus infection, and all dogs should be vaccinated annually.

Important Points in Treatment

1. Early fluid therapy is the most important factor in treating dogs with parvovirus infection. Intravenous fluids both re-hydrate and nourish the sick dog.
2. Additional treatment includes prevention of secondary bacterial infection and drugs to control vomiting and diarrhea.
3. Average length of hospitalization is between 5 to 8 days. Some cases require treatment for 2 weeks or longer.
4. While your dog is in the hospital, it is maintained on IV fluids in isolation. While visiting your pet isn't actively discouraged, it can lead to spread of the virus to other areas of the hospital, yourself, and other animals at home.
5. We understand your concern for your pet and every attempt will be made to contact you if an update on your pet's condition is necessary.
6. With parvovirus, no prediction can be made as to survival. Most puppies do survive the infection and there are no long term effects. In general, very young puppies (under 12 weeks) with no prior vaccines will have a harder time recovering.
7. There is a much poorer prognosis with certain breeds; especially Rottweilers, Dobermans, Pit Bull Terriers and Labrador Retrievers. The survival rate in these breeds is much less than all other breeds of dogs.
8. A bland diet is necessary when your pet is re-introduced to solid food. Follow the instructions that your veterinarian gives in feeding your puppy.
9. Please feel free to ask your veterinarian or our veterinary technicians ANY questions that you may have about the disease.