

Inflammatory Bowel Disease in Dogs

What is inflammatory bowel disease?

Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) is a chronic disease of the intestinal tract. Occasionally, the stomach may be involved. Most dogs with IBD have a history of recurrent or chronic vomiting or diarrhea. During periods of vomiting or diarrhea, the dog may lose weight, but is normal otherwise.

What causes this disease?

The cause of IBD is poorly understood. In fact, it appears there are several causes. Whatever the cause, the end result is that the lining of the intestine is invaded by inflammatory cells. An allergic-type response then occurs within the intestinal tract. **This inflammation interferes with the ability to digest and absorb nutrients.**

For some dogs, diet plays a role in causing IBD. Bacterial proteins may be involved in other cases. In most instances, an exact underlying cause cannot be identified.

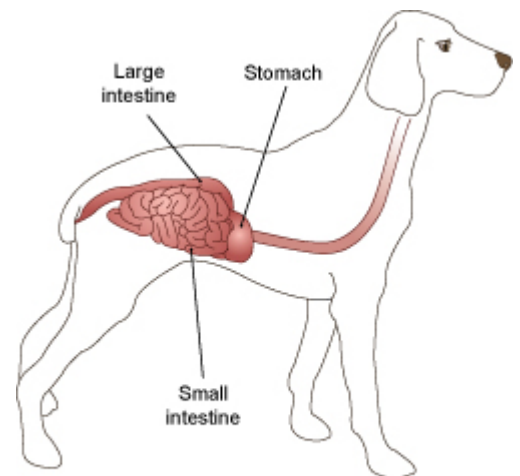
How is IBD diagnosed?

Diagnostic tests for IBD range from fecal evaluations to blood tests to intestinal biopsies.

Is IBD treatable?

Depending on the results and on which part of the bowel appears to be involved, special diets may be used as a therapeutic trial. These diets include hypoallergenic foods, low residue diets or high fiber diets. In some cases, it may take eight to twelve weeks for a positive response to be seen. Medication may or may not be given initially, depending on the particular case. If it appears from the blood tests that bacterial overgrowth is present, antibiotics may be prescribed. Anti-inflammatory drugs are used to control the clinical signs in many patients, but are used with caution since their potential for damaging side-effects can be significant.

Since not all dogs respond to the same medication or food, a series of drugs and/or foods may be necessary.



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What is the prognosis?

The prognosis is generally good. Once the appropriate drugs or diet is determined, many dogs remain on these for life, although it may be possible to decrease the drug dosage over time. Occasionally, a dog will be able to stop drug therapy. Most dogs do well for many years while others require alterations in therapy every few months. Unfortunately, a few dogs will fail to respond to treatment.

Some severe forms of canine inflammatory bowel disease will eventually progress to intestinal cancer. This finding is well documented in human beings and, in recent years, it has also been shown to occur in dogs.

This client information sheet is based on material written by: Ernest Ward, DVM

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