

Anaphylaxis

Information about Anaphylaxis

An anaphylactic reaction or anaphylaxis is an immediate hypersensitivity (allergic) reaction to a foreign substance, usually, a foreign protein called an allergen. In milder cases of anaphylaxis, a localized hypersensitivity reaction such as extreme swelling at the site of the bee sting will occur. The local inflammation is the result of a release of histamine by cells called Mast Cells. In severe reactions, the localized reaction becomes systemic and the release contents of the Mast Cells is released throughout the body, resulting in a systemic anaphylaxis.

"Theoretically, any foreign substance can produce an anaphylactic reaction."

The most common substances to cause anaphylaxis are food proteins, insect bites, medications, vaccines, environmental pollutants, and chemicals.

It is important to note that this is an abnormal reaction. The body's immune system over-reacts to the foreign protein or substance resulting in the reaction. Most cases of anaphylaxis are thought to have a hereditary or familial basis (i.e. runs in families).

Clinical signs are dependent on the route of exposure (i.e. via the mouth, skin, inhalation, injection, etc.), the amount of antigen, and the level of the pet's immune response. The most common clinical signs of a hypersensitivity reaction are itchiness/irritation, red skin, swelling over the body (i.e. skin wheals or hives), swelling of the face or muzzle, excessive salivation/drooling, vomiting, and/or diarrhea.

In the event of an anaphylactic reaction, the patient may collapse and have difficulty breathing with cyanosis (bluish color to the tongue and gums).



Anaphylaxis is diagnosed by a medical history of recent exposure to an offending substance and the characteristic clinical signs. An anaphylactic reaction is a medical emergency and immediate treatment is required. The first step is the removal of the inciting substance whenever possible (this may involve washing your pet if the allergen is topical). Your pet is then stabilized to prevent or minimize systemic shock. We actively ensure that the airway is open and that blood pressure and circulation to vital organs is maintained. Intravenous fluid therapy is initiated along with emergency drug administration. Since anaphylactic reactions often worsen with each episode, the main goal is to prevent subsequent exposure to the offending substance

If you're concerned your pet has anaphylaxis or has serious vomiting and diarrhoea please seek veterinary attention early. Our team of amazing veterinarians are available 24/7 for any emergencies when your vet is not available. Feel free to call us if you aren't sure you should see a veterinarian or not, and our team can assist you.



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