

Constipation

What is constipation?

Constipation is infrequent or difficult passage of stool and is typically a temporary condition. Many constipated dogs will experience straining or pain when attempting to defecate. Since one of the major functions of the colon is water absorption, sometimes the retained stool becomes hard and dry, which makes passing it even more difficult. Some constipated dogs may pass small amounts of liquid faeces or blood due to their excessive straining. Sometimes, the liquid faeces are mistaken for diarrhea, but actually, when the dog strains, a small amount of liquid faecal material is able to squeeze around the hard faecal mass.

What causes constipation?

There are many potential causes of constipation in dogs. The most common cause is ingestion of irritating or indigestible substances. Other common causes of constipation in dogs include:

- fear, anxiety, and other behavioral conditions that alter passage of normal bowel movements
- megacolon (enlarged colon)
- painful conditions, such as osteoarthritis that make it uncomfortable to pass stool
- pelvic injuries or abnormalities
- sudden change in diet or ingestion of new foods
- tumors or masses in the colon or rectum



How can I tell if my dog is constipated?

Most dogs produce faeces at least once a day. If your dog is constipated, they will probably attempt to pass faeces unsuccessfully several times. You may observe your dog circling excessively, scooting (dragging bottom along the ground) or squatting frequently, or even crying out in severe cases. Other clinical signs include decreased appetite, vomiting, small amounts of watery faeces or faeces that contains mucus (without a normal stool), and weight loss. Some constipated dogs will have a tense, painful abdomen and cry or growl if you press on their stomach or lower back.

How is constipation diagnosed?

Most cases will be diagnosed through a physical examination and medical history. When evaluating your dog's abdomen, your veterinarian will likely feel a firm, distended colon. In many cases, abdominal radiographs (X-rays) will be performed to determine the extent of constipation and whether or not an obstruction exists. Blood tests and urinalysis are valuable to search for dehydration or infection.

How is constipation treated?

Most cases of constipation are relatively easy to treat. The first step is to loosen or remove the impacted, hardened fecal matter. Medications and laxatives may be required. More serious conditions may require additional treatments, including surgery or lifelong medical or dietary management.

If you're concerned your pet has Constipation 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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