

BLOAT

BLOAT CAN KILL A DOG IN HOURS AND IS EXTREMELY PAINFUL. Gastric dilatation-volvulus (GDV) or bloat is a serious, life-threatening condition of large breed dogs. Deep chested dogs such as Alaskan Malamutes and Samoyeds are particularly at risk.

Bloating of the stomach is often related to swallowed air (although food and fluid can also be present). It usually happens when there's an abnormal accumulation of air, fluid, and/or foam in the stomach ("gastric dilatation").

Stress can be a contributing factor also. Bloat can occur with or without "volvulus" (twisting). As the stomach swells, it may rotate 90° to 360°, twisting between its fixed attachments at the esophagus (food tube) and at the duodenum (the upper intestine). The twisting stomach traps air, food, and water in the stomach. The bloated stomach obstructs veins in the abdomen, leading to low blood pressure, shock, and damage to internal organs. The combined effect can quickly kill a dog.

SYMPTOMS:

Typical symptoms often include some (but not necessarily all) of the following, according to the links below. Unfortunately, from the onset of the first symptoms you have very little time (sometimes minutes, sometimes hours) to get immediate medical attention for your dog. Know your dog and know when it's not acting right.

- **Attempts to vomit (usually unsuccessful); may occur every 5-20 minutes** *This seems to be one of the most common symptoms & has been referred to as the "hallmark symptom."*
- **Doesn't act like usual self** *Perhaps the earliest warning sign & may be the only sign that almost always occurs*
- **Significant anxiety and restlessness** *One of the earliest warning signs and seems fairly typical*
- **"Hunched up" or "roached up" appearance.** *This seems to occur fairly frequently*
- **Bloated abdomen that may feel tight (like a drum)** *Despite the term "bloat," many times this symptom never occurs or is not apparent*
- Pale or off-color gums *Dark red in early stages, white or blue in later stages*
- Lack of normal gurgling and digestive sounds in the tummy *Many dog owners report this after putting their ear to their dog's tummy*
- Coughing
- Unproductive gagging
- Heavy salivating or drooling
- Foamy mucous around the lips, or vomiting foamy mucous
- Unproductive attempts to defecate
- Whining
- Pacing
- Licking the air
- Seeking a hiding place
- Looking at their side or other evidence of abdominal pain or discomfort
- May refuse to lie down or even sit down
- May attempt to eat small stones and twigs
- Drinking excessively
- Heavy or rapid panting
- Shallow breathing
- Cold mouth membranes
- Apparent weakness; unable to stand or has a spread-legged stance *Especially in advanced stage*
- Accelerated heartbeat *Heart rate increases as bloating progresses*
- Weak pulse
- Collapse

PREVENTION: Because no one understands the cause of bloat, there is no real way to prevent it. However, there are indications that following a few simple measures may help.

Above all, remember – Bloat is an emergency situation in which **TIME** is the key to a successful management.

1. Simethicone (store brand - Phazyme) should be kept in your cabinet at all times. It is an anti-gas pill that can help to buy your vet some time should you think your dog is bloating. It may even stop the bloat if in the beginning stages. If you wait too long, the dog will not be able to swallow the pill. Make sure you tell your vet you have given the pills.
2. Don't exercise your dog heavily 1 hour before or 1-2 hours after eating.
3. Avoid single large meals. Instead, feed 2-3 small meals a day
4. Don't let your dog drink large quantities of water at one time.

Studies have shown significant new findings including the importance of what you feed your dog and that surprisingly the raised dog bowls are related to an increase in bloat also. Purdue University did a study that and their latest research indicates that raising your dog's bowl may actually increase your dog's chance of getting bloat by as much as 100% or more!

<http://www.vet.purdue.edu/epi/update2.htm>

Risk Factor	Relative Risk	Interpretation
Age in years	1.20	20% increase in risk for each year increase in age
Chest depth/width ratio (1.0 to 2.4)	2.70	170% increase in risk for each unit increase in chest depth/width ratio
First degree relative with GDV (yes vs. no)	1.63	63% increase in risk associated with having a first degree relative with GDV
Using a raised feed bowl (yes vs. no)	2.10	110% increase in risk associated with using a raised food bowl
Speed of eating (1-10 scale)	[for Large dogs only] 1.15	15% increase in risk for each unit increase in speed of eating score for large dogs

Table from Purdue University at the link above

Other sources: Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association

<http://avmajournals.avma.org/doi/abs/10.2460/javma.2000.217.1492>

This information is not intended to replace advice or guidance from veterinarians or other pet care professionals. It is simply being shared as an aid to assist you with your own research on this very serious problem.

NEW PURDUE BLOAT STUDY- 3/2009

Recent studies are shedding more light on gastric dilatation volvulus (GDV), otherwise known as bloat. It is the second leading cause of death in large-breed and giant-breed dogs. GDV strikes suddenly and has a mortality rate as high as 30%.

Research primarily at Purdue University has identified a number of feeding management and dietary factors that increased the risk of GDV. Following are some of the Study recommendations:

- Feed two or more meals a day
- Feed no more than one cup per 33 lbs of body weight per meal when feeding two meals
- Feed an energy-dense diet to reduce volume but avoid a diet where a high amount of calories are from fats
- Feed a variety of different food types, the inclusion of human foods in a dry dog food diet was associated with a 59% decreased risk while canned pet foods was associated with a 28% decreased risk
- When feeding dry food also includes foods with sufficient amounts of meats and meat meals, i.e.: beef, lamb, poultry and fish
- Fat should not be listed in the first four label ingredients, nor should corn
- Citric acid should not be used as a preservative
- Feed a food with larger particles and include larger pieces of meat to the diet
- Avoid moistening dry foods, but don't restrict water intake before and after feeding
- Reduce a rapid speed of eating
- Avoid raising the food bowl
- Minimize stressful events
- Restrict vigorous exercise one hour before and two hours after meals

Learn to recognize signs of GDV. They can progress rapidly to shock and death. Get to your veterinarian or emergency hospital the moment you suspect GDV