



Blog

Pet Diabetes: A Treatable Condition

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Animal diabetes is as serious a disease for pets as it is for humans. If left untreated, it can lead to other medical problems, like cataracts and slow wound healing, even death. Since it's a fairly common disorder, it's important to be on the lookout for the warning signs, and to follow steps to prevent your cat or dog from getting diabetes. Although no cure exists, diabetic animals can live a happy, normal life as long as they receive the appropriate treatment.

Causes

Feline and canine diabetes is caused by damage to the pancreas. Predisposing factors include chronic pancreatitis, obesity (15% more than ideal body weight), genetic predisposition, poor quality diet, hormonal abnormalities, stress and certain medications. Your pet's gender can also be a factor. In dogs, females are affected twice as often as males, and in cats, diabetes is seen more often in males.

Signs

The most common signs of diabetes in dogs and cats are increased thirst and urination. Another early indicator of the disorder is if your pet is losing weight despite having a healthy appetite. Animals with diabetes may also exhibit signs of weakness, depression, abdominal pain or sudden blindness because of cataract formation. Your pet may also demonstrate a lack of appetite, which is a sign of serious illness.

Diagnosis

Your veterinarian will perform a thorough physical examination of your pet and ask questions about your pet's health history. Your pet's diet history is also very important. Blood work and urinalysis need to be done to confirm the presence of diabetes.

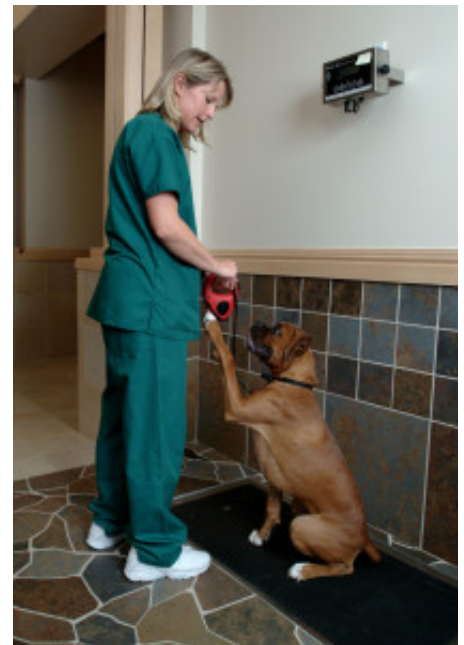
Diabetes is often complicated by urinary tract infections or other infections, hormonal disorders (i.e. Cushing's disease, hyperthyroidism), cancer or other illnesses. An untreated diabetic cat or dog will have a build-up of chemical compounds called ketones in the body, which can make your pet very sick and can even be life-threatening.

Depending on the condition of your pet at this initial exam, hospitalization may be necessary to allow for correction of any metabolic problems and to stabilize your pet.

Treatment

Most often, insulin is needed to treat diabetes in pets. Your veterinarian can show you how to give your pet an insulin injection, which may be needed one to two times a day. It's also important that diabetic pets be fed at regular intervals and receive their insulin injection at the scheduled time each day. This may mean making some adjustments in your own schedule to accommodate your pet's medical needs.

Occasionally, in cats that develop diabetes due to obesity, the disease can be controlled through diet and oral medications instead of insulin.



Prevention

The best thing you can do is to take your pet to see your family veterinarian for routine wellness exams. Adult cats and dogs generally need an annual check-up, while older pets should visit their vet twice a year.

Your family veterinarian can make sure your pet is maintaining a healthy weight and can provide ideas for incorporating more exercise into your pet's life, if needed. If your cat or dog does need to shed some pounds, your family veterinarian will recommend the diet that makes the most sense for your pet depending on stage of life, breed, etc.

For more information about diabetes, treatments and ongoing management, [click here](#).

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