

Diabetes Mellitus in Dogs

What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a condition that develops when a dog can't produce enough insulin to control their blood sugar level (causing it to become dangerously high).

In a healthy dog, sugars travel from their food, to their stomach and then into their blood. Blood sugars then then provide energy to cells all around the body. Insulin is crucial to get sugar into cells, so in diabetic dogs, who don't produce enough insulin, blood sugars stay in the blood and build up to worryingly high levels.

What are the symptoms?

The first symptoms of diabetes in dogs tend to include:

- Increased thirst
- Increased appetite
- Urinating more
- Weight loss
- Lethargy



Left untreated, diabetes can lead to a much more serious condition called 'diabetic ketoacidosis' (DKA), this is an emergency. DKA is when a product called ketones builds up in the body. Ketones in large number are extremely dangerous and cause the following symptoms:

- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Reduced appetite
- Unsteady on their feet
- Collapse
- Breath smells sweet (like pear drops)

How can we diagnose Diabetes?

It is very simple to diagnose Diabetes. Usually a blood test and urine sample can be confirmative. If you are suspicious your dog may have Diabetes then collecting a fresh urine sample for us to test is very helpful.

How can we treat Diabetes?

Diabetes is a condition that needs lifelong treatment and a lot of commitment, especially in the early stages as your dog is stabilised. However, once treatment has started, your dog is likely to start to feel much better within a week or two.

Treating diabetes includes:

- Insulin injections:
 - Insulin injections need to be given twice a day, every day, at set times, 12-hours apart. They should be given within an hour of feeding (ideally just before, or at the same time as your dog eats). Your vet will show you how much insulin to give and how to inject it. Injecting may seem scary at first but it's something you (and your dog) will quickly get used to. The hypodermic needles are so small that some dogs don't even notice their injections!
- Feeding:
 - To keep your dog's blood sugar levels as steady as possible, you will need to feed them twice a day, at set times. They will need the same amount and type of food every day and should ideally never have treats in between meals as this can raise their blood sugar levels.



What are some of the possible complications?

- Injecting too much or too little insulin,
- The insulin may go off if it is not kept in the fridge or stored longer than its expiry date, therefore may not be as effective,
- Not handling/mixing the insulin correctly, or shaking it too vigorously can damage the enzymes in it, again causing it to not be effective,
- Your dog might not eat or may be sick,
- Your dog may become hypoglycaemic (low blood sugar levels), risking collapse and seizures.

If you experience any of these problems, please just get in contact with the practice.

What happens if their blood sugars go too low (hypoglycaemia)?

Having low blood sugar is known as a 'hypo'. This can happen if they have had too much insulin or not enough food. This is an emergency and should be treated as soon as possible.

Some of the signs to watch out for include:

- Vomiting
- Wobbly
- Spaced out or vacant
- Twitching
- Collapse

If this occurs it is important you get something into them that is sugary quickly. We suggest rubbing honey or jam onto their gums and contacting us immediately.

How do we monitor diabetic patients?

We will need to see your dog for regular blood sugar and urine test at the beginning until we get them stabilised. We also may suggest to have your pet in the clinic for the day so we can monitor their blood sugar levels every 2 hours to get their dosage of insulin correct.

To book in for your dog in for a health check or testing, please call us on 01423 228080 or visit www.clarohillvets.co.uk.