

Diabetes In Dogs

Canine diabetes is a chronic condition that occurs when a dog's body fails to produce enough insulin, a hormone crucial for regulating blood sugar levels. While diabetes is an incurable disease, it is manageable, and with proper care, many dogs can lead happy and active lives. However, untreated diabetes can lead to serious health complications.



What is Canine Diabetes?

Diabetes in dogs arises when the pancreas cannot produce sufficient insulin or the body doesn't respond appropriately to the hormone. Insulin is essential for processing glucose (sugar) from food, allowing it to enter cells for energy. When insulin levels are inadequate, blood sugar levels rise, a condition known as hyperglycaemia. Dogs can tolerate elevated blood sugar for a time, but they are at risk of serious health issues, especially when faced with other illnesses, like urinary tract infections.



Types of Canine Diabetes

1. **Type I Diabetes:** This is the most common form, where the pancreas produces little to no insulin. Dogs with this type require lifelong insulin treatments.

2. **Type II Diabetes:** This is rare in dogs and occurs when the pancreas produces some insulin, but not enough, or the body does not respond effectively to it.

Symptoms of Diabetes in Dogs

If you notice the following signs, your dog may be suffering from diabetes:

- **Increased Urination:** Excess glucose in the blood leads to more urine production as the body tries to eliminate the sugar.
- **Excessive Thirst:** To compensate for fluid loss from increased urination, your dog may drink more water.
- **Increased Hunger:** Despite eating normally, dogs may feel hungry because their bodies cannot utilise the sugar from food without sufficient insulin.
- **Weight Loss:** Without insulin, the body cannot absorb sugar effectively, leading to weight loss as it breaks down fat reserves for energy.



Diagnosing Diabetes in Dogs

A diagnosis typically involves blood tests that reveal elevated glucose levels in both blood and urine. If there's uncertainty, your vet may conduct a fructosamine test to assess average blood glucose levels over time, distinguishing between persistent diabetes and temporary spikes due to stress.

Treatment Options for Canine Diabetes

Once diagnosed, your vet will determine the appropriate type and dosage of insulin for your dog, which may take time to adjust. Most dogs require insulin injections twice

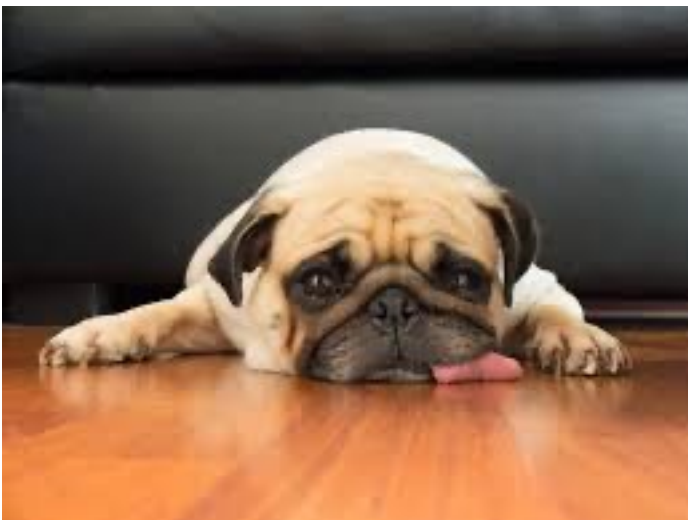
daily, approximately 12 hours apart, usually after meals. Regular monitoring of your dog's blood glucose levels is essential, and your vet will guide you through the process of administering insulin and testing.

Key Points:

- Stick to a strict routine for insulin administration and feeding times as advised by your vet.
- Use the correct concentration of insulin to avoid errors.

Signs the Insulin Medication Isn't Working

Regular veterinary check-ups are crucial to monitor your dog's condition. Contact your vet if you notice any changes in your dog's thirst, appetite, or if they seem unwell. Immediate veterinary assistance is necessary if your dog appears dizzy or lethargic, as these can indicate dangerously low blood sugar levels.



Dietary Considerations for Diabetic Dogs

A balanced diet plays a significant role in managing diabetes. Your vet can recommend the right type and amount of food for your dog, as well as the timing of meals and insulin injections. High-fibre diets are often beneficial, as they help regulate blood sugar levels more effectively than low-fibre diets. Avoid giving human treats, as they can adversely affect glucose levels.

Long-Term Impacts of Canine Diabetes

With proper treatment, many diabetic dogs continue to lead fulfilling lives. However, they may be more susceptible to certain health issues, such as:

- **Cataracts:** High sugar levels can lead to cataracts, which may require surgical correction. Many dogs adapt well to blindness, relying on their other senses.
- **Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs):** The excess sugar in urine can promote bacterial growth, leading to frequent UTIs.
- **Dental Health:** Maintaining dental hygiene is crucial, as infections in the mouth can raise blood sugar levels.