

Colitis

Your pet has been diagnosed as having Colitis. Colitis is an inflammation of the large bowel (colon). This inflammation may be acute (sudden onset of brief duration) or chronic (long-term), disrupting your pet's normal bowel habits.

Acute colitis occurs most commonly in dogs and frequently responds to one to three weeks of therapy. Chronic colitis can go on for several years or perhaps a lifetime. This brochure has been prepared to help you understand colitis, its causes and treatment, and how to care for the pet with this condition.

SIGNS OF COLITIS

Some dogs and cats may have minor clinical signs; others have severe and sometimes disabling or fatal signs. Dietary therapy and certain medications can help control the inflammation and most signs, but they generally do not provide a cure.

The inflammation in chronic colitis leads to excess water in your pet's stool. This is manifested as diarrhea; you most likely will see the frequent passage of small quantities of mucus and/or blood-streaked stools. The diarrhea may be intermittent or continuous.

Abdominal pain, depression, fever, weight loss, and a dull coat may also be present.

CAUSES OF COLITIS

Many things can cause colitis, as can be seen from the chart below. In many cases, the exact cause of colitis may never be determined.

Acute

1. Whipworms
2. Spastic colitis
3. Bacterial colitis
4. Fungal colitis
5. Food-induced

Chronic

1. Whipworms
2. Eosinophilic colitis
3. Ulcerative colitis
4. Histoplasma
5. Prototheca
6. Polyps
7. Tumors
8. Allergies (including food allergies)
9. Foreign body
10. Spastic colitis
11. Histocytic ulcerative colitis
12. Plasmacytic lymphocytic colitis
13. Immunoproliferation enteritis

DIAGNOSES OF COLITIS

If your veterinarian suspects that your pet has colitis he or she may perform some, most, or all, of these diagnostic tests:

1. Abdominal palpation
2. Rectal exam
3. White and red blood cell counts
4. Blood chemistry profile
5. Urinalysis
6. Multiple fecal examinations
7. Bacteriologic cultures of feces
8. X-rays of the digestive tract (possibly with barium)
9. Colonoscopy (Examination of colon through a small, lighted tube inserted through the anus)
10. Biopsy of the colon
11. Exploratory surgery of the abdomen

To evaluate how your pet is responding to therapy, your veterinarian will periodically repeat some of these lab tests.

MANAGEMENT OF CHRONIC COLITIS

Remember, few cases of colitis can be cured. The goal of therapy for chronic colitis, therefore, is to enable your pet to maintain as normal a lifestyle as possible. Diet and drugs can generally suppress the inflammation in your pet's colon and help prevent recurrences.

DIET

Many cases of chronic colitis respond to one of two dietary approaches:

1. Increasing the amount of fiber in the animal's diet.
- Or
2. Feeding a diet that is not likely to stimulate an allergic reaction (hypoallergenic diet)

There is no way to predict which approach might be better for your pet.

Based on experience treating colitis, your veterinarian will recommend one approach or the other. Follow the directions explicitly- *feed no other food or treats*. If your pet is taking any other medicine, tell your veterinarian about it so that interactions between the diet and medicine can be controlled. A trial with a therapeutic diet usually takes three to six weeks before your veterinarian will be able to accurately assess the results of the trial. Be patient, and remember, diarrheas in some pets may actually worsen for a few days while the pet's digestive tract is becoming accustomed to the new diet.

Your veterinarian may recommend one of the following diets or a homemade diet.

NUTRITION FOR THE PET WITH COLITIS

- w/d** A fiber-rich, fat reduced diet for the dog or cat with chronic colitis.
- r/d** A high-fiber, low fat diet for animals that need more fiber than w/d provides.
- d/d** A hypoallergenic diet made from mutton and rice (canned) or egg and rice (dry).

IMPORTANCE OF FIBER

Fiber is a carbohydrate in our diet that cannot be digested by enzymes. There are two kinds of fiber: one is soluble in water; the other is not. Insoluble fibers provide bulk to the diet and help food and water move through the digestive tract.

It is well established that fiber-rich diets can be used to manage constipation in pets because fiber increases water retention in the intestine, helping to alleviate the constipation.

Amazingly enough, fiber also can be used to treat some diarrheas. In diarrheic animals fiber normalizes intestinal transit time, which increases water absorption from the colon. Therefore, there is less water lost in the stool. That's why high-fiber diets have a place in the treatment of colitis.

DRUGS

Many drugs used to control chronic colitis have side effects and may even be dangerous- your veterinarian will prescribe them with caution. Drug therapy involves five categories of medications:

1. Drugs that relieve diarrhea
2. 5-aminosalicylic acid
3. Steroids for relief of inflammation
4. Drugs that suppress the immune system
5. Antibiotics

SPECIAL HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS FOR YOUR PET
