

# Bloat in Dogs

## Information Sheet



### What is Bloat in Dogs?

Bloat, medically known as Gastric Dilatation and Volvulus (GDV), is a serious and potentially life-threatening condition that affects dogs. It occurs when a dog's stomach fills with gas, food, or fluid, causing it to distend or swell. In severe cases, the stomach can twist on itself (volvulus), cutting off blood supply and affecting other organs, which can be fatal if not treated promptly.

### Causes of Bloat:

The exact cause of bloat in dogs is not always clear, but several factors may contribute to its development, including:

1. **Diet:** Feeding your dog one large meal a day or using certain types of food that promote gas production can increase the risk.
2. **Eating Habits:** Rapid eating, gulping air, or excessive drinking can lead to bloat.
3. **Breed Predisposition:** Some breeds, such as Great Danes, Doberman Pinschers, and Standard Poodles, are more prone to bloat.
4. **Genetics:** There may be a genetic component involved in the risk of developing bloat.
5. **Stress and Anxiety:** Stressful situations or excessive exercise after eating can trigger bloat.

### Signs and Symptoms:

Recognizing the signs of bloat is crucial for early intervention. Common symptoms include:

1. **Distended Abdomen:** The dog's belly may appear swollen and taut.
2. **Unsuccessful Attempts to Vomit:** Dogs may try to vomit but be unable to expel anything.
3. **Restlessness:** Restlessness, pacing, and discomfort are common.
4. **Excessive Drooling:** Dogs may drool excessively due to nausea.
5. **Rapid Breathing:** Increased respiratory rate and shallow breathing may be observed.
6. **Weakness:** As the condition progresses, dogs can become weak, lethargic, and unresponsive.
7. **Collapse:** In severe cases, dogs may collapse, indicating a life-threatening emergency.

## **Treatment and Prevention:**

Immediate veterinary care is essential if you suspect your dog has bloat. Treatment may involve:

1. **Decompression:** The vet will relieve gas and pressure in the stomach through a tube or a large needle.
2. **Surgery:** If the stomach has twisted (volvulus), emergency surgery is required to reposition it and assess for any tissue damage. Fluid and oxygen therapy
3. **Hospitalisation:** Keeping pets closely monitored to aid in recovery.

The outlook for GDV is generally favourable when it is detected early, followed by swift gastric decompression and surgical intervention. Regrettably, it is estimated that approximately 10-15% of dogs experiencing GDV may succumb to complications.

This risk is heightened in cases where dogs are not treated within a six-hour window after displaying clinical signs, have pre-existing heart issues before surgery, or necessitate the surgical removal of portions of the stomach or spleen.

## **To reduce the risk of bloat:**

1. **Feed Smaller Meals:** Divide your dog's daily food into smaller, more frequent meals.
2. **Slow Down Eating:** Use slow-feeding bowls or interactive toys to prevent rapid eating.
3. **Avoid Excessive Exercise:** Limit strenuous activity before and after meals.
4. **Selective Breeding:** If you have a breed predisposed to bloat, consult with a veterinarian or breeder about responsible breeding practices.

## **Prophylactic Gastropexy**

This surgical procedure aims to reduce the risk of GDV and is commonly carried out in high-risk young dogs, often during the process of desexing. It involves securing the stomach to the body wall through surgical means, effectively preventing its twisting in the future. If you seek further information or guidance on this procedure, we encourage you to promptly schedule an appointment with one of our experienced veterinarians. They can provide you with comprehensive details and advice tailored to your dog's specific needs.

## **Conclusion:**

Bloat in dogs is a serious condition that requires immediate attention. Knowing the signs and risk factors can help you take preventive measures and seek prompt medical care if needed. Always consult with a veterinarian for guidance on your specific dog's needs and health concerns.