



THE BARRACKS
VET SURGERY
MOSMAN

ACUTE PANCREATITIS

What is acute pancreatitis?

Acute pancreatitis is defined as a sudden onset of inflammation of the pancreas. It is usually with associated cranial abdominal pain (seen by a bowing posture) and persistent vomiting. Often it follows a “dietary indiscretion” such as raiding a bin or being given rich food.

What causes pancreatitis?

The amylase and lipase enzymes that digest food are normally stored in the pancreas as inactive zymogens until they are released as needed for food digestion. However sometimes, characteristically after a high fat meal, the enzymes activate whilst still inside the pancreas, causing painful self-digestion.

Other causes of pancreatitis include infection, injury to the abdomen, ingestion of medications, and insecticides to control fleas and ticks, such as organophosphates.

Pancreatitis may accompany inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), diabetes, or liver disease.

What are some symptoms of pancreatitis?

Many pets will hide the symptoms lest they appear vulnerable to competitors or predators. If you notice any of the following symptoms, you should visit a Vet without delay.

- Persistent vomiting.
- Anorexia (lack of appetite, not eating).
- Cranial abdominal pain (may crouch or bow down).
- Dehydration (the skin may “tent” when lifted, eyes may appear sunken, gums tacky).
- Shock - which is when the body reduces blood flow to extremities.
Signs include: cold extremities/ears, rapid heart rate, slow shallow breathing, slow capillary refill time, (the time it takes pinkness to return when you press your finger against the pet's gum), cold dry mucous membranes, possibly collapse and convulsions.
- Occasionally diarrhoea.
- Peritonitis or ascites may follow.

What is the treatment for pancreatitis?

- A blood test will determine the diagnosis.
- If it is a severe case, admission to the Vet Hospital will be necessary, otherwise close monitoring at home.
- Intravenous Fluid therapy and electrolytes may be needed.
- Nil by mouth as even smelling or hearing food being prepared will cause increased pain.
- Pain medication.
- Anti-nausea medication (antiemetics).
- Antibiotics, if appropriate.
- Nutritional support such as Vitamin B12 supplementation.
- Assessment for concurrent disease and appropriate treatment.

What should we do AFTER pancreatitis?

After 24 or 48 hours, if vomiting has ceased, the vet may decide to re-introduce small amounts of drinking water. After this, tiny amounts of food may be slowly given. This food must be bland, and low fat (fat stimulates pancreatic action). Hills i/d may be suitable. Any reaction such as pain or vomiting will be carefully monitored.

Pancreatitis may recur, so it is imperative that a new food regime begins when the pet returns home. An ongoing low fat diet will help avoid more attacks. Absolutely NO scraps or treats may be given unless the Vet specifically OKs them.

Obese patients should be monitored to guide a weight loss plan.

Are some pets more susceptible to pancreatitis than others?

Obese dogs and some miniature schnauzers, mini poodles, silky or Yorkshire terriers are more at risk. Cats who are middle aged or older, or obese, and Siamese cats are at higher risk.

What is meant by CHRONIC pancreatitis?

Acute pancreatitis refers to a sudden onset of symptoms, with hopefully a fairly quick recovery.

Chronic pancreatitis, on the other hand:

- Is a long term, ongoing condition.
- Is more common in cats than dogs.
- May present as intermittent episodes of inappetance and lethargy, with or without vomiting
- Is often accompanied by weight loss.
- Can be diagnosed with a blood test.
- Is often controlled with anti-nausea medication and special diets.