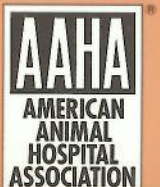


Diabetes



*For more information about
pet health care, ask your
veterinarian or visit
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What is diabetes mellitus?

Diabetes mellitus is a disease that leads to chronic elevation of blood glucose, meaning the "blood sugar" is too high. Blood sugar is regulated by a hormone called insulin. If your pet's body does not produce enough insulin, or is insensitive to available insulin, he may develop diabetes. Diabetes mellitus is a common illness of dogs and cats, as well as of humans.

What causes diabetes?

There is no known cause of diabetes mellitus. However, obese pets run a greater risk of becoming diabetic. Ask your veterinarian about an appropriate diet for your pet to prevent obesity.

What physical signs could I see in my pet?

The most notable signs of diabetes are increased water consumption along with increased frequency of urination. Weight loss may also be a sign of diabetes. While there can be other explanations for these problems, diabetes should always be considered as a possible cause.

If you notice any changes in your pet's behavior or physical appearance that might indicate diabetes, visit the veterinarian as soon as possible. Your veterinarian will need to measure the level of glucose in your pet's blood and urine and check for other diseases that may be causing your pet to show these physical signs.

Which pets are most susceptible to diabetes?

Diabetes mellitus affects primarily middle-aged and older pets. Dogs of either sex and of any breed may develop diabetes, but it is most commonly seen in obese females. Certain dog breeds are also more likely to have diabetes.

Cats develop diabetes more often than dogs, and male cats get the disease about twice as frequently as females. The typical diabetic cat is overweight, although diabetes that remains untreated will cause a cat to lose weight over time.



How can diabetes mellitus be treated?

Blood glucose will not "fix itself" and must be treated according to your veterinarian's recommendations. Pets with diabetes generally require insulin injections to stabilize blood sugar, but some diabetic cats can be stabilized with oral medications and diet. If diabetes is left untreated, it can be fatal to any pet.

Once your pet has been stabilized and testing is complete, home treatment may begin. Frequent visits to the veterinarian will be required in the first month or so to monitor progress and adjust insulin dosages if necessary. It may take a month or more to successfully regulate your pet's insulin requirements.

How can I take care of my diabetic pet at home?

Consistency is the key to ensuring your pet's health. You must pay close attention to administration of medication and diet. Give your pet insulin injections one or more times a day as directed by your veterinarian. Also, give your pet the same food in the same quantity at the same time every day. If you are going out of town, be sure to have someone care for your pet and give the appropriate medication until you return.

Here are other suggestions to keep in mind as you care for your diabetic pet:

- Feed your pet only in accordance with your veterinarian's recommendations.
- Exercise your pet—the more exercise your pet gets, the less insulin his body requires. Try to stay in a routine; don't overdo it one day and then do nothing at all the next.
- Give your pet his medication at the same time every day. Do not make any changes in medication without first checking with your veterinarian.
- Do not give insulin to your pet if he is not eating. Call your veterinarian immediately if you notice any change in appetite or behavior.
- Reward your pet with plenty of love for good behavior when giving insulin injections. To make the experience as comfortable as possible, be extremely patient and gentle.
- Keep a small container of honey or Karo syrup on hand. If your pet acts sleepy, weak, or lethargic, rub the syrup or honey on his gums. Then take your pet to the veterinarian as soon as possible.

With appropriate treatment and your patience and love, your diabetic pet can live comfortably for many years.