

Distemper in Dogs

General Information

Distemper is a highly contagious disease of dogs, wolves, coyotes, raccoons, mink and ferrets. It is caused by a virus that is easily spread through the air and by contaminated objects, much like the cold virus spreads in people.

Though the disease occurs more often in young unvaccinated dogs, it can occur in older vaccinated dogs with immune problems.

Signs range from those of a mild respiratory problem, such as runny eyes and nose, to severe diarrhea, vomiting and seizures. If dogs survive the initial attack, they may be left with uncontrollable muscle or limb jerking and/or periodic seizures.

Vaccination is the best means of preventing canine distemper. All dogs should be vaccinated yearly and all puppies should receive a series of vaccines starting at 5-6 weeks of age.

Important Points in Treatment

1. Distemper is serious disease that is often fatal. Currently we have no drugs to destroy the virus. Treatment is aimed at supporting general health and preventing bacterial infections. In many cases, hospital treatment is necessary.
2. Give all medication as directed. Call the doctor if you cannot give the medication.
3. Wipe away any secretions from the eyes, nose, and mouth several times each day. Call the doctor if you cannot keep the nostrils unplugged.
4. **Diet:** Good nutrition is vital to recovery from distemper.

Feed as Follows: _____

5. **Special Instructions:** _____

6. Distemper is contagious! Affected dogs should be isolated from other dogs. Use disinfectants such as a mixture of bleach and water to kill the virus in the environment. The mixture should consist of one capful of bleach per gallon of water. Wash all toys, bowls, brushes and bedding.

Notify the doctor if any of the following occur:

- Your dog refuses to drink.
- Your dog has difficulty breathing.
- Your dog vomits or has diarrhea.
- Your dog has seizures or convulsions.
- Your dog's signs worsen.