

Comfort & Pain Relief

Why is My Dog Throwing Up?



It's not uncommon for a dog to throw up. While occasional vomiting can be expected with dogs (after all, they can eat a bunch of crazy stuff), it's not normal for your dog to throw up regularly. Because vomiting can be a sign of a serious medical condition and because it can be a painful, exhausting, and anxiety-causing experience for them¹, it's important to find out why your dog is throwing up and help to stop it as quickly as possible.

Acute vomiting in dogs comes on suddenly is short in duration, and it may resolve on its own. If the underlying cause doesn't resolve or isn't removed or treated, acute vomiting can become progressively worse, and it can even become chronic if left untreated. Chronic vomiting is vomiting that happens occasionally or regularly for a week or more.

Common causes of vomiting in dogs:

- **Something they've eaten.** Dogs often vomit from eating table scraps or garbage, so keep a careful eye on them and be sure to secure away all food and food waste. Foreign objects are another common culprit of vomiting (chewed up toys, socks, rocks, you name it — dogs have eaten it)! Ingesting toxins can cause dogs to vomit (such as antifreeze, lead, zinc, xylitol, or sago palm). Finally, if your dog is allergic to the food they're eating, this may also cause vomiting.
 - **Motion sickness.** Car sickness affects as many as 48% of dogs² and is a very common reason for dogs to throw up. To see if your dog suffers from car sickness, take this quiz. Although vomiting is a sign of motion sickness, other signs include drooling, panting and restlessness during the car ride. If your dog does suffer from car sickness, they may benefit from a medication prescribed by their veterinarian.
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- **An infection of the GI tract.** Whether it's intestinal worms, a change in your dog's normal gut bacteria, or Parvovirus, these infections can cause vomiting in dogs.
- **Other problems within the GI tract.** Stomach ulcers, irritation of the stomach or intestine (gastritis or enteritis), IBD (inflammatory bowel disease), and neoplasia (an abnormal growth of tissue) can make your dog throw up.
- **Diseases elsewhere in the body.** A few diseases that can cause dogs to vomit include, but are not limited to, Addison's disease, leptospirosis, kidney or liver disease, and diabetes.

What you (and your vet) can do for your dog's vomiting

The best advice is to call your veterinarian to determine if you can treat your dog at home or if your dog needs to be seen immediately. If your dog is otherwise healthy, has only vomited once or twice in the past 24 hours, has normal bowel movements, seems to want to eat, and is acting normally, your veterinarian may recommend that you withhold food for 24 hours, then start back up with bland food like boiled rice and cooked boneless skinless chicken breasts (withhold the spices). However, if your dog has certain pre-existing conditions or isn't eating their food, has decreased energy or urinations/defecations, or is known to have eaten something they shouldn't have, they should be seen by a vet immediately (within 24 hours) when vomiting is present.

If your dog has vomited more than two times in a 24-hour period or is throwing up more than once per week on average, it's time for a visit with your vet. Throwing up repeatedly can lead to dehydration and electrolyte and base/acid imbalances, which can make your dog's prognosis worse. Repeated vomiting can also be a sign of a life-threatening condition, like xylitol poisoning, foreign body ingestion, Addison's disease, or leptospirosis and risks of complications and death go up the longer you wait to seek treatment.

When you visit your veterinarian for your dog's vomiting symptoms, they'll take a thorough history, do a physical exam, and will run tests (these could include an analysis of a stool sample, bloodwork, x-rays, an ultrasound, or urine testing) to begin to determine the cause. During the exam, they'll also assess for any other problems, like dehydration, that are caused by vomiting. Your vet can administer or prescribe specific treatments. They may give your dog an injection to help stop the vomiting, treat the underlying cause, and correct any dehydration and/or electrolyte problems that have developed.

What can you do to decrease the chance that your dog vomits?

The good news is a number of conditions that cause vomiting can be prevented. GI worms can be prevented by using a monthly parasiticide. Making sure that your dog is up to date on their vaccinations can prevent a number of infectious causes of vomiting such as parvovirus and leptospirosis. As will feeding a balanced diet and keeping toxins and other harmful chemicals safely secured and out of harm's way. Finally, taking your dog to your veterinarian for annual examinations can ensure that you identify chronic conditions such as liver or kidney disease, diabetes, or Addison's disease.

If your dog is throwing up regularly, it is not normal. Regular checkups, deworming and vaccination can keep your dog healthy. Work with your veterinarian to find out why your dog is vomiting, stop it, and improve their quality of life.

Learn more at zoetispetcare.com

1. Conder GA, Sedlacek HS, Boucher JF, Clemence RG. Efficacy and safety of maropitant, a selective neurokinin 1 receptor antagonist, in two randomized clinical trials for prevention of vomiting due to motion sickness. J Vet Pharmacol Ther. 2008;31(6):528-532.
 2. The Harris Poll: Custom Motion Sickness and Noise Aversion Omnibus Pet Owner Quantitative Research Report, December 2018.
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