



Natterjacks vet



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MANAGING A PUPPY WITH VOMITING AND DIARRHOEA!

This guide outlines the most important factors in nursing a sick puppy through a severe bout of vomiting and diarrhoea (gastroenteritis). Most of these remedies can be made at home or purchased from a chemist and even the most severe of bugs - even parvovirus - can be successfully managed without veterinary assistance by following these simple guidelines.

Warmth

- Keep the room temperature up – ideally around 25C
- Young puppies have no reserves of body fat and when unable to keep food down they rely on external heat to keep their body temperature up.
- A thermometer bought from the chemist or most large supermarkets should be used to check the rectal temperature if possible - normal temperature is 101°F to 102°F/38°C to 39°C.

Hydration

- A puppy needs about half a teaspoon (2.5mls) of water intake every hour per kilogram bodyweight to maintain itself when in good health (e.g. 10mls or two teaspoons for a 4kg puppy). However when losing fluids through diarrhoea and vomiting this requirement is increased two or even four-fold. Dehydration is what eventually leads to death from gastroenteritis irrespective of the underlying cause.
- Weigh your puppy on some kitchen scales (in e.g. a shoe-box) or pick him up when standing on some bathroom scales and subtract the difference. This gives you an idea of the amount of food and water needed as well as dosages of medication required.
- If not eating or drinking voluntarily then syringe an electrolyte solution into the side of the mouth, giving no more than 2.5mls per mouthful. Aim to give 2.5-5mls every 30-60 minutes for a 1kg puppy (more if larger) The correct proportions of salt and sugar are VITAL:
 - Add to 1 litre (1000ml) of lukewarm water:
 - 6 level teaspoons of sugar
 - ½ a level teaspoon of normal salt
- We have some enhanced rehydration sachets available for purchase at the surgery which can be used instead if desired OR you can use commercially available rehydration sachets such as Diarolyte, Tesco Rehydration Treatment etc
- Do not let them drink too much in one go – dehydrated puppies are often very thirsty and will drink an excessive quantity which the poorly stomach cannot cope with resulting in even more vomiting! As a rule allow them to drink for a maximum of 10 seconds and then take the bowl away for 10 minutes before offering more.

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Nutrition

Some source of protein and energy is needed to enable the puppies to fight the infection – the electrolyte solution described above will purely help fight the dehydration

- Syringe feeding with food should start once the vomiting has eased
- Pureed baby food in jars e.g. Heinz, Cow and Gate etc are an excellent and readily available source of such nutrition. Aim to purchase the meat based ones e.g. chicken and vegetable rather than the dairy based ones.
- Highly digestible complete diets can also be purchased from the surgery for syringe feeding – there is a powdered diet (RCW Recovery formula) which is useful for this purpose and tins of Purina CN and EN can be blended with water for syringe feeding.
- You can also make your own food for syringe feeding in a blenderiser. A readily digestible protein source (e.g. boiled egg/white fish or salmon fillets/chicken or turkey breast) mixed 50:50 with a carbohydrate source (mashed potato, rice or pasta) and a little added water will make a nice puree which can be syringe fed. The CN diet mentioned above can also be mixed with water to make puree. You should not use raw meat at this stage – see the note later.
- Syringe feed about 2.5-5ml of this food every hour for a 1kg puppy – again more if larger, weigh your puppy on some kitchen scales. Do not feed with 2 hours of a vomiting episode (though you may continue to give rehydration fluids as per the above).
- If they are keen to eat voluntarily this is a very good sign indeed but just ensure that they don't eat too much in one go as they will overstretch their inflamed stomachs and result in a more vomiting – allow them to eat a little every hour or two.

Medication

- For puppies with vomiting and diarrhoea you may have been dispensed medication from the surgery and it is important to follow the instructions carefully and ensure the full course of medication is given
- There are some 'home remedies' that can be acquired from the chemist which can be very useful - do not tell the chemist that they are for animal treatment as they will refuse to sell you them!
 - Gaviscon liquid – great for vomiting and diarrhoea – give 0.5ml/kg bodyweight THREE times daily. Pepto-bismol is an alternative.
 - Kaolin suspension – great for diarrhoea relief, give 0.5ml/kg bodyweight THREE times daily until the diarrhoea eases (max 7 days)
 - Imodium liquid (1mg/7.5ml) – slows down the bowels and can be good for both vomiting and diarrhoea, give 1ml per kg bodyweight THREE times daily until symptoms have resolved

Recovery phase

- Once eating voluntarily feed highly digestible food (as per the above protein/carbohydrate mixes) little and often (4-6 small meals a day) until there has been no vomiting for 48 hours. Once the stools are slightly formed they can be weaned over the course of a 48 hour period onto a good quality dry complete puppy food. The better quality complete diets should have added colostrum

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and probiotics to aid with gut immunity and digestion.

- Of the more affordable commercially available tinned diets Chappie is a reasonably digestible tinned food that can be fed during the recovery phase. Royal Canin Sensitivity Control and Purina EN are very good tinned diets and can be purchased from the surgery or most vet practices.
- Do not feed raw food to puppies that have had vomiting or diarrhoea – it is harder for their delicate gastrointestinal systems and carries higher bacterial levels. In the wild raw food is usually much fresher than our prepared meats that have had quite a lot handling and have usually been pre-frozen and no matter how carefully this is done it can never be as biologically secure. Furthermore, raw food in the wild is pre-chewed and partly digested by the mother to begin the digestive process as puppies are not able to break down some of the protein fibres as effectively. Although cooking the meat is not as effective as the mother's digestive enzymes, it does help to break down some of the proteins into forms that are more readily absorbed and assimilated from the intestinal tract. They can be introduced to raw food at a later stage if this is to be the diet of choice but generally it is best to wait until there has been no vomiting or diarrhoea for a full 7 days.
- The rehydration mix (with salt and water) mentioned above can also be left down for them to drink voluntarily as well.

When is the vet needed?

- If the vomiting persists for more than 48 hours (24 hours in puppies under 12 weeks of age) and none of the syringed food or water stays down.
- If diarrhoea is on-going for more than 5 days. Fresh blood in the diarrhoea is not uncommon in dogs and is not an immediate concern if they are otherwise bright and well in themselves but if this persists for more than 48 hours then the vet should be contacted.
- If they become very weak and floppy so that they are unable to hold their head up and they are unable to swallow. Giving oral food or fluids could be dangerous in this situation as it could enter the airway and lead to pneumonia. Generally a puppy in this state is in need of emergency veterinary attention.

Hospitalisation for intravenous fluids may be necessary if the vomiting is very persistent, particularly in young puppies who will can become dehydrated. Diarrhoea on its own rarely requires hospitalisation but some antibiotics may be required if the measure described above have been unsuccessful. However Oral Rehydration Therapy using the sugar/salt combination as described above will avoid the need for hospitalisation in the vast majority of cases.

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