

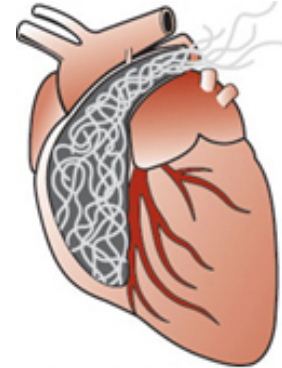


HEARTWORM POST-TREATMENT INSTRUCTIONS

Heartworm Disease is becoming increasingly more common in this area. Several cases are diagnosed each week.

The heartworm lives primarily in the right side of the heart, and in the nearby large blood vessels. The female worms produce large numbers of immature heartworms which circulate in the blood.

The microfilaria (baby heartworms) are ingested by a mosquito biting an infected dog. After living in the mosquito for 1-2 weeks, the microfilaria is injected into another dog when the mosquito feeds. It takes about six months for the heartworm to reach adulthood after infecting the dog.



© American Heartworm Society

The important thing for dog owners to remember is that a great deal of damage can occur before any obvious signs are noticed. Delayed treatment may result in heart failure and/or permanent damage to the liver, lungs, and kidneys with eventual death.

The signs of heartworm disease which you are most likely to notice include coughing, sluggishness, rapid tiring, and labored breathing.

Diagnosis is made by taking a blood sample and performing an occult heartworm test. It will be six or seven months after exposure before microfilaria can be detected in the blood.

Treatment for heartworms consists of killing the adult worms with injectable medication. The medication is injected into the back muscles, so the pet is sore for about 7 – 10 days. Your veterinarians will tailor an injection schedule depending on the risk category of your pet. **We have a very high degree of success in treating heartworm disease when we get an early diagnosis** before severe heart damage has taken place. Physical examination and laboratory testing will determine whether or not your pet should undergo treatment once heartworms are diagnosed.

Your dog may be required to stay at the hospital for up to 2 weeks with each treatment. After treatment, the adult worms die and are carried by the blood to the lungs where they lodge in small blood vessels. There they decompose and are absorbed by the body over a period of several months. This decomposition poses a significant threat to the patient and is why no cardiovascular activity is recommended for at least 6 weeks after treatment. Reactions to the drugs are not uncommon, and **there is always some risk involved in treating a dog for heartworms.**

*Thank you for choosing Pearland Animal Hospital.
Please call (281) 485-2496 if you have any questions or concerns.*

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Caring for Your Pet After Heartworm Treatment

Medications:

- Antibiotics may be given to prevent secondary infections.
- Anti-inflammatory medications to decrease the risk of an adverse event.
- Other medications as directed.

Exercise:

- **Enforced rest is ESSENTIAL!**
- **Positively NO strenuous exercise for 8 weeks!**

The heartworms will die over the next 6 weeks. As they die and are broken down, pieces of them could lodge in other parts of the body's blood vessels, causing unnecessary complications, especially if your pet's activity is too strenuous. **THE FIRST 15 DAYS AFTER TREATMENT ARE THE MOST CRITICAL!** It is best to limit your pet to leash exercise only long enough to urinate and have bowel movements. Avoid all excitable circumstances and stress as much as possible.

Environment:

- Maintain a dry, cool, stable environment.
- Do NOT leave your pet outside unattended.
- Do NOT walk your pet during the hottest part of the day unless absolutely necessary.
- Fresh water should be available at all times.

Observation:

Notify the Clinic if ANY of the following occur:

- Coughing
- Refusal to eat.
- Lameness
- Blood in the urine or bowel movements.
- Labored breathing.
- Anything else unusual for your dog.

**For after-hours emergencies, please call
VCA Animal Emergency Hospital at (713) 941-8460**

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