



## PANCREATITIS

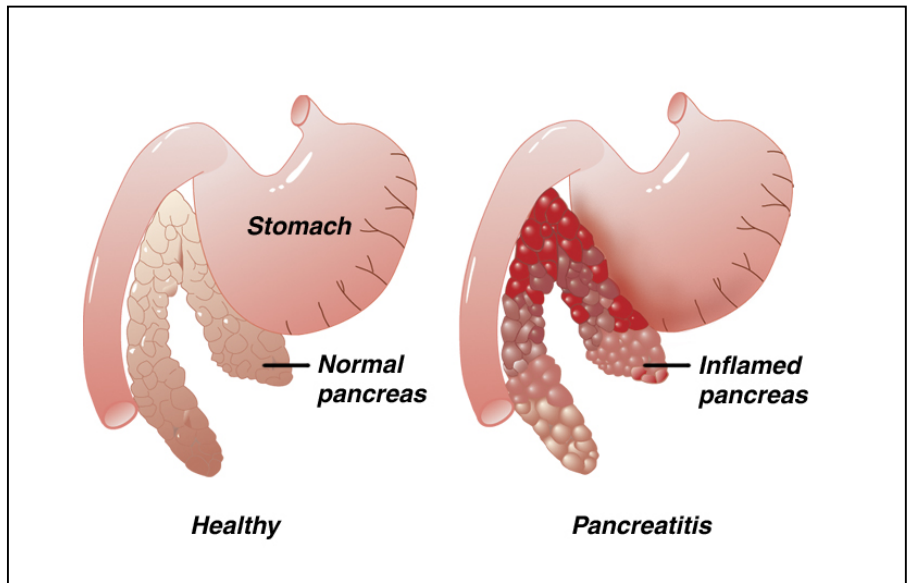
### ***What is pancreatitis?***

The pancreas is a vital organ which lies on the right side of the abdomen. It has two functions:

- 1) To Produce Digestive Enzymes
- 2) To Produce Hormones Such As Insulin

When the pancreas becomes inflamed, the disorder is called *pancreatitis*. It is a disease process that is seen commonly in the dog, and less commonly in the cat. There is no age, sex, or breed predisposition.

There are two main forms of acute or sudden onset pancreatitis: 1) the mild, edematous form and 2) the more severe, hemorrhagic form. A few dogs that recover from an acute episode of pancreatitis may continue to have recurrent bouts of the acute disease, known as chronic, relapsing pancreatitis. The associated inflammation allows digestive enzymes to spill into the abdominal cavity resulting in secondary damage to the liver, bile ducts, gall bladder, and intestines.



### ***What causes it?***

The cause of pancreatitis is not known; however, there may be several contributory factors. It is often associated with eating a rich, fatty meal. In some cases, it may be associated with the administration of corticosteroids; however, some animals with pancreatitis do not have exposure to either.

Under normal conditions, digestive enzymes produced by the pancreas are activated when they reach the small intestines. In pancreatitis, these enzymes are activated prematurely in the pancreas instead of in the small intestines. This results in digestion of the pancreas itself. The clinical signs of pancreatitis are often variable, and the intensity of the disease will depend on the quantity of enzymes that are prematurely activated.

### ***What are the clinical signs?***

The diagnosis of pancreatitis is based on three criteria: clinical signs, laboratory tests, and radiographs (x-rays) and/or ultrasound examination. The disease is typically manifested by nausea, vomiting, fever, abdominal pain, and diarrhea. If the attack is severe, acute shock, depression, and death may occur.

Laboratory tests usually reveal an elevated white blood cell count; however, an elevated white blood cell count may also be caused by many other things besides pancreatitis. The elevation of pancreatic enzymes in the blood is probably the most helpful criteria in detecting pancreatic disease, but some dogs with pancreatitis will have normal enzyme levels. Radiographs and ultrasound studies may show an area of inflammation in the location of the pancreas. Unfortunately, many pets with pancreatitis will elude detection with any of these tests. Consequently, the diagnosis of pancreatitis may be tentative in some cases.

### ***How is pancreatitis treated?***

The successful management of pancreatitis will depend on early diagnosis and prompt medical therapy. The mild form of the disease is best treated by resting the pancreas from its role in digestion. The only way to "turn off" the pancreas is to withhold all oral fluids and food. This approach is accompanied by intravenous fluids to maintain normal fluid and electrolyte balance. The presence of shock necessitates the immediate and intense use of intravenous fluids and shock medications. Analgesics are often administered due to the intense pain pancreatitis often causes.

### ***Will my pet recover?***

The prognosis depends on the extent of the disease when presented and a favorable response to initial therapy. Pets that present with shock and depression have a very guarded prognosis. Most of the mild forms of pancreatitis have a good prognosis.

### ***Will there be any long-term problems?***

There are three possible long-term results that may follow severe or repeated pancreatitis.

- 1) If a significant number of cells that produce digestive enzymes are destroyed, a lack of proper food digestion may follow. This is known as *pancreatic insufficiency* and can be treated with daily administration of enzyme tablets or powder in the food.
- 2) If a significant number of cells that produce insulin are destroyed, *diabetes mellitus* can result. This can usually be treated with daily injections of insulin.
- 3) If the chronic form occurs, there may be repeated bouts of illness that are difficult to diagnose. These pets may have several days of poor appetite, fever, and lethargy. In some cases, diabetes mellitus can ultimately develop. However, most pets recover with no long-term effects.

## Treatment for Pancreatitis

1) Withholding of food for 6-24 hours or as directed by your veterinarian.

\_\_\_\_\_ with hold food for \_\_\_\_\_ hrs.

\_\_\_\_\_ offer ice chips

\_\_\_\_\_ with hold food and water \_\_\_\_\_ hrs.

\_\_\_\_\_ recommend hospitalization with iv fluid/medicine administration.

2) Provision of an easily digested, bland diet. Rx: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ No special diet necessary

(A home made diet based on boiled chicken or sometimes fish with rice is often recommended. It is important that your pet does not receive any other foods during this period.)

Begin feeding \_\_\_\_\_tbsp. if no vomiting 1-2 hours after this meal, repeat throughout the day. If vomiting occurs at any time, withhold food and water again. You may try feeding again in 6 hours - contact your veterinarian.

3) Treatments:

\_\_\_\_\_ An injection of \_\_\_\_\_, an anti-emetic, was given.

\_\_\_\_\_ An injection of \_\_\_\_\_ was given.

\_\_\_\_\_ SQ fluids were administered. Your pet may appear to have lumps and bumps (the fluid under the skin). These bumps will slowly disappear as the fluid absorbs over the next hours.

4)

Medication	Dose (mg)	Amount	Instructions