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What Is Parvo?

Parvovirus, or "parvo", is a virus that attacks the lining of the digestive system. It causes dogs and puppies to not be able to absorb nutrients or liquids. Puppies are especially prone to it because they have an immature immune system. When dogs and puppies contract parvo, they often have diarrhea, vomiting and lethargy. Usually they stop eating and develop a foul-smelling, liquid stool that may or may not contain blood.

Parvo is a deadly virus. Do not underestimate it. If your dog or puppy shows any of the symptoms, do not hesitate to seek veterinary care.

Generally, it takes 7-10 days from the time of exposure for dogs and puppies to start showing symptoms and to test positive for parvo. If you have had your dog for less than 7 days, it is likely that the dog had parvo before you brought it home. In the case of puppies purchased from the breeder or pet store, I urge you to contact the breeder or pet store immediately and insist that he/she reimburse you for all veterinary costs for

treating the pup. **There is NO EXCUSE for any breeder or pet store selling sick or terminally ill puppies! Don't let them get away with it!**

How do I know if my dog or puppy has parvo?

If your dog or puppy has any of the symptoms listed above, take him or her to a vet immediately! Do not delay! The parvo test is done by testing a stool sample taken directly from the dog or brought in with you from home. Your vet should have the proper testing materials at his or her office and should be able to tell you within a few minutes if the test is positive or negative. If that vet cannot tell you, find out why or find another vet!

How is parvo treated?

Without intense treatment, the victims of parvo often die of dehydration. Treatment generally consists of IV or sub-cutaneous fluids and antibiotics. There is no cure. Veterinarians can only treat the symptoms, and try to keep the dog alive by preventing dehydration and loss of proteins. Because parvo is a virus and not a bacteria, it is unaffected by antibiotics, but many veterinarians use antibiotics alongside the fluids to treat any secondary infections that could result from the damage parvovirus does.

Even dogs who have survived parvo can get it again. In the case of my rescued parvo puppies, a puppy who tested negative on Monday was dead that Saturday, despite being admitted into the hospital on Monday! It strikes fast and without mercy. Caution! Dr. Cathy Priddle has warned that sulfa drugs have been known to cause dehydration in dogs. Animals infected with parvovirus should **NOT** be given sulfa drugs!

If you are going to try to treat parvo yourself, **call your vet for advice. Do not ask me!** I am not a vet and I do not know how to treat dogs for parvo!

Where do dogs get parvo?

Dogs and puppies can contract parvo even if they never leave their yards. Parvo virus, despite what you might hear, is NOT an airborne virus. It is excreted in the feces of infected dogs, and if someone -- human, dog, bird, insect, etc. -- steps in (or otherwise comes in contact with) the excrement, the possibility for contamination is great. Some people speculate that flies, well-known for being attracted to excrement, can deposit the parvovirus into the dog's food dish. This is a good argument **against** feeding your dog outside (and for picking up the poop right away)! If you think you may have come in contact with parvovirus, a strong solution of bleach and water does kill the virus, so you can wash your shoes and clothes, even your hands with it to reduce the risk of infecting your dog.

Remember, if your dog or puppy has contracted parvo, he may be highly contagious! He will shed the virus in his stool for up to several weeks while he fights the infection, even after he comes home from the hospital (if that is where he is treated). To avoid spreading the virus to other dogs, try to have your infected puppy poop on newspaper and pick it up right away so that flies don't get a chance to carry it off. Keep your puppy away from other dogs for a few weeks (consult your vet to get a better estimate as to how long he will be contagious), and bathe him with a gentle soap as frequently as you dare to clean off any virus-infected feces that may get on him.

What if I've had parvo in my home?

If you have had parvo in your home, use a strong bleach/water solution to kill it. Soak the yard with it -- better to kill the grass than your next dog! Be careful using it on carpets and fabrics, though, as the bleach could affect the color. Parvo can live up to 6 months or so (maybe longer) in your home or yard. Before you bring home another dog, be sure it has a strong immunity to parvo. You can have a veterinarian draw blood and run a titre to find out how well your prospective dog will fare in a parvo-infected environment.

Adult dogs **generally** have a higher resistance than puppies do, but they need to be kept current on their vaccines, too. Recently I received email from someone whose 16 year old poodle got parvo. If in doubt, have your vet do the titre.

How can I avoid parvo?

It's impossible to avoid parvovirus. It's everywhere. You could bring it home without even knowing it. The delivery person could bring it to your house. Your kids, the neighbor borrowing a cup of sugar, anyone. The best chance your dog or puppy has of fighting parvo is through immunization.

Puppies require immunization at regular intervals for the first few months of their lives to build their immunity to parvovirus. Your veterinarian can help you determine a good vaccination schedule. If you want to be very sure of your puppy's resistance to parvo before taking him out into public, have your veterinarian draw blood for a "titre" (pronounced like "tighter"). He or she can warn you to leave puppy at home if the titre shows a low resistance, and plan a course of action for boosting his immunity.

Parvo vaccines come in two "flavors:" killed and modified live. Killed vaccines are made from dead parvovirus cells, whereas modified live vaccines are made with live parvo cells that have been altered in a laboratory. Some people believe that defective batches of modified live parvo vaccines have caused parvo infection. For that reason, they recommend giving dogs only **killed** vaccines. If you have any questions or doubts about using modified live vaccines, discuss them with your veterinarian.

Can I or my children get parvo?

Ask your doctor. I have never heard of someone getting parvovirus from a dog, but that doesn't mean it's not possible!

Rottweilers, dobermans and other black and tan breeds are especially prone to parvo for some reason. If you have one of these breeds, it's even more important to make certain your puppy or dog gets immunized properly!

This information is provided by Phoenix Area Rottweiler Rescue.

PARVOVIRUS INFECTION

What is Canine Parvo?

Canine parvovirus (CPV) infection is a relatively new disease that appeared in 1978. Because of the severity of the disease and its rapid spread through the canine population, CPV has aroused a great deal of public interest. The virus that causes it is very similar to feline distemper, and the two diseases are almost identical. Therefore, it has been speculated that the canine virus is a mutation of the feline virus. However, that has never been proven.



How does a dog become infected with parvovirus?

The causative agent of CPV disease, as the name infers, is a virus. The main source of the virus is the feces of infected dogs. The stool of an infected dog can have a high concentration of viral particles. Susceptible animals become infected by ingesting the virus. Subsequently, the virus is carried to the intestine where it invades the intestinal wall and causes inflammation.

Unlike most other viruses, CPV is stable in the environment and is resistant to the effects of heat, detergents, and alcohol. CPV has been recovered from dog feces even after three months at room temperature. Due to its stability, the virus is easily transmitted via the hair or feet of infected dogs, contaminated shoes, clothes, and other objects. Direct contact between dogs is not required to spread the virus. Dogs that become infected with the virus and show clinical signs will usually become ill within 7-10 days of the initial infection.

How does this disease affect the dog?

The clinical manifestations of CPV disease are somewhat variable, but generally take the form of severe vomiting and diarrhea. The diarrhea may or may not contain blood. Additionally, affected dogs often exhibit a lack of appetite, depression, and fever. It is important to note that many dogs may not show every clinical sign, but vomiting and diarrhea are the most common signs; vomiting usually begins first. Parvo may affect dogs of all ages, but is most common in dogs less than one year of age. Young puppies less than five months of age are often the most severely affected and the most difficult to treat.

How is it diagnosed?

The clinical signs of CPV infection can mimic other diseases causing vomiting and diarrhea; consequently, the diagnosis of CPV is often a challenge for the veterinarian. The positive confirmation of CPV infection requires the demonstration of the virus in the stool

or the detection of anti-CPV antibodies in the blood serum. Occasionally, a dog will have parvovirus but test negative for virus in the stool. Fortunately, this is not a common occurrence. A tentative diagnosis is often based on the presence of a reduced white blood cell count (leukopenia). If further confirmation is needed, stool or blood can be submitted to a veterinary laboratory for the other tests. The absence of a leukopenia does not always mean that the dog cannot have CPV infection. Some dogs that become clinically ill may not necessarily be leukopenic.

Can it be treated successfully?

There is no treatment to kill the virus once it infects the dog. However, the virus does not directly cause death; rather, it causes loss of the lining of the intestinal tract. This results in severe dehydration, electrolyte (sodium and potassium) imbalances, and infection in the bloodstream (septicemia). When the bacteria that normally live in the intestinal tract are able to get into the blood stream, it becomes more likely that the animal will die.

The first step in treatment is to correct dehydration and electrolyte imbalances. This requires the administration of intravenous fluids containing electrolytes. Antibiotics and anti-inflammatory drugs are given to prevent or control septicemia. Antispasmodic drugs are used to inhibit the diarrhea and vomiting that perpetuate the problems.

What is the survival rate?

Most dogs with CPV infection recover if aggressive treatment is used and if therapy is begun before severe septicemia and dehydration occur. For reasons not fully understood, some breeds, notably the Rottweiler, have a much higher fatality rate than other breeds.

Can it be prevented?

The best method of protecting your dog against CPV infection is proper vaccination. Puppies receive a parvo vaccination as part of their multiple-agent vaccine given at 8, 12, and 16 weeks of age. In some situations, veterinarians will give the vaccine at two week intervals and an additional booster at 18 to 20 weeks of age. After the initial series of vaccinations when the dog is a puppy, all dogs should be boosted at least once a year. Dogs in high exposure situations (i.e., kennels, dog shows, field trials, etc.) may be better protected with a booster every six months. Pregnant bitches should be boosted within two weeks of whelping in order to transfer protective antibodies to the puppies. The final decision about a proper vaccination schedule should be made by your veterinarian.

Is there a way to kill the virus in the environment?

The stability of the CPV in the environment makes it important to properly disinfect contaminated areas. This is best accomplished by cleaning food bowls, water bowls, and other contaminated items with a solution of one cup of chlorine bleach in a gallon of water (4 to 8 ounces of bleach in a gallon of water OR 250 mL in 4 liters of water). It is important that chlorine bleach be used because most "virucidal" disinfectants will not kill the canine parvovirus.

Does parvovirus pose a health risk for me? How about for my cats?

It is important to note that at the present time, there is no evidence to indicate that CPV is transmissible to cats or humans.

This info is provided by Animal Clinic.com

