What You Should Know About Hemorrhagic Gastritis with Ulcers

The stomach stores food, produces acidic digestive juices and moves food through the digestive tract in a timely fashion. Gastritis, which is very common, is an inflammation of the stomach. Hemorrhagic gastritis with ulcers is a more severe form of gastritis. In addition to being inflamed, the lining of the stomach may be ulcerated and bleed easily.

Causes
There are many potential causes of this condition and in many cases the exact cause can’t be determined. Any substance or condition that causes irritation to the stomach or intestinal tract may contribute. Potential causes include: viruses; bacteria (spoiled food, eating garbage); caustic substances and toxins (certain plants, drugs, heavy metals, and chemicals); medications such as aspirin; and ingestion of foreign objects such as toys and other non-digestible materials. Stress and diseases of the gastrointestinal tract, kidneys and liver may also contribute to gastritis and the development of ulcers.

Signs
Some dogs may have no signs even if they have severe disease. Vomiting is the sign seen most often. Blood may be seen in the vomit, either as fresh, red blood or as dark, coffee-grounds appearing material. The stools may be darker than normal to nearly black in color. Licking, salivation or repeated attempts at swallowing could be signs of nausea. Pets may also have...
abdominal pain (possibly seen as restless behavior, abnormal posturing, increased breathing rate or panting), anorexia and lethargy.

**Diagnosis**
Your veterinarian may suspect hemorrhagic gastritis with ulcers if your pet has a history of vomiting in which the vomited material contains blood. The fluid loss associated with the vomiting and diarrhea may result in dehydration. Your veterinarian may need to perform several or all of the following tests to try to confirm the diagnosis and identify the cause: a physical examination; blood tests; a urinalysis; a stool check for blood and parasites; and X-rays of the stomach, often using a contrast agent. Your veterinarian may want to examine the stomach with a lighted instrument call an endoscope. Sometimes a surgical exploration of the stomach is necessary.

**Treatment and Home Care**
Specific treatment depends on the cause, if it can be found. If your veterinarian determines that chronic kidney failure is the cause of gastritis, he or she will begin treatment for kidney failure. Foreign bodies will need to be removed, etc.

Severe gastric bleeding needs aggressive therapy. Your veterinarian may want to hospitalize your pet to rehydrate and restore lost electrolytes. In rare cases a blood transfusion may be needed. Food and water may be withheld for a few days to decrease acid production and allow the stomach time to heal. During this time, your veterinarian will administer fluids to help prevent dehydration and correct electrolyte imbalances. Your veterinarian may also prescribe antibiotics or medications to inhibit acid secretion in the stomach. Home care consists of following your veterinarian’s instructions for proper feeding for your pet and giving all prescribed medications. Some pets may need to be on medications for the rest of their life. Your veterinarian may want to exam your pet on a frequent basis to monitor your pet's condition.

**Nutritional Plan**
If your pet has hemorrhagic gastritis with ulcers, your veterinarian may give you special feeding instructions. Your veterinarian may recommend a highly digestible, low- to moderate-fat food such as Hill's® Prescription Diet® i/d® Canine and i/d® Feline Gastrointestinal Health. Prescription Diet® g/d® Canine and g/d® Feline Early Cardiac-Healthy Aging are also highly digestible and reduced in fat. If the suspected cause is a food allergy, your veterinarian may recommend a food composed of ingredients that your pet is unlikely to have eaten such as Hill's® Prescription Diet® d/d® Canine or d/d® Feline Skin Support. Alternately, your veterinarian may recommend a food made of hydrolyzed proteins which minimize allergic reactions to food. Such foods include Hill's® Prescription Diet® z/d® Canine and z/d® Feline Low Allergen.

**Transitioning Food**
Unless recommended otherwise by your veterinarian, gradually introduce any new food over a seven-day period. Mix the new food with your pet's former food, gradually increasing its proportion until only the new food is fed.

If your pet is one of the few that doesn’t readily accept a new food, try warming the canned food to body temperature, hand feeding for the first few days, or mixing the dry food with warm water (wait ten minutes before serving). Feed only the recommended food. Be patient but firm with your pet. This is important because the success or failure of treatment depends to a large degree on strict adherence to the new food.