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Caring for the Vomiting Dog at Home

Although some cases of vomiting need to be treated by a veterinarian many are amendable to treatment at home. When in doubt please call.

The basic premise is to assess your dog like you would a one-year old baby;

Scenario 1...Vomited once but seems fine otherwise? Probably fine to treat at home initially.

Scenario 2...Vomited four times at home in the last hour and is acting depressed? Veterinarian needed.

When should we see a vomiting dog?

- z Projectile or violent vomiting
- z Can't keep water down
- z Vomiting for more than 1 day
- z Vomiting more than 3 times in one hour
- z Vomiting combined with depression or grogginess
- z Blood in the vomit
- z Any suspicion for poisoning or having swallowed a toy or foreign object
- z Dehydration
- z Vomiting in the very young & very old

Treating the Vomiting Dog at Home

1. Remove all food and water. Feeding too soon is the most common cause of further vomiting so don't rush this step. This allows the stomach and intestines to empty out and rest. Do not offer treats or try to tempt your dog to eat. Put the toilet seats down and make sure other pet food is up. Even if your dog seems hungry do not feed.
2. Check for signs of dehydration (see below)
3. If no vomiting occurs after 2 hours, begin to give *small* amounts of clear liquids (water, Pedialyte or other electrolyte solution) frequently. A rule of thumb is to give 1 cup of water per 40 pounds of body weight every 2 or 3 hours throughout the day and night. Over the next 12 hours slowly increase the amount of water offered. If your dog vomits right after drinking then withhold water for another hour and try again using a few ice chips. If your dog vomits repeatedly during this phase he or she should be examined.
4. After 12 hours of no vomiting offer *small* amounts of bland food. The rule of thumb for this is ½ cup per 50 pounds of bland food every hour or two. Thus a 20-pound terrier would get ¼ cup of bland food. Feed the bland food for a few days, then wean your dog back onto regular food over the next 3 days by mixing it with the bland food.
5. If your dog vomits after eating then withhold food for another hour and try again. If the dog vomits repeatedly during this phase you should call for an exam.



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Home-Cooked Bland Food Recipes

1. Chicken & Rice

Remove all skin from a chicken breast. Dice up 1 boiled chicken breast into small cubes. Prepare 2 parts of boiled white rice. If the dog also has diarrhea add 1 teaspoon of active yeast culture yogurt to the food. Mix well.

2. Cottage Cheese & Rice

Mix 1 part low fat cottage cheese with 2 parts prepared boiled white rice. If the dog has diarrhea add 1 teaspoon of active yeast culture yogurt to the food. Mix well.

3. Hamburger & Rice

Boil 1 part lean hamburger, drain all fat away. Prepare 2 parts of boiled white rice. If the dog has diarrhea add 1 teaspoon of active yeast culture yogurt to the food. Mix well.

4. Baby Food

Mix 1 part meat-based baby food (lamb, turkey, beef, etc.) with 2 parts prepared boiled white rice. If the dog has diarrhea add 1 teaspoon of active yeast culture yogurt to the food. Mix well.

Please note that the above diets are not balanced for long term use.

How to Assess Hydration

To judge hydration status lift up your pet's lip and rub your finger along the gums. The gums are normally slimy and wet. Check your own and compare. If the gums feel dry or tacky then dehydration is a possibility. Be cautious though – you can't repeat this test a gazillion times or you will dry the gums out and get a false sense of hydration.

Another way to assess hydration is called skin tenting. If you gently grab the skin on the scruff of your pet's neck and pull it up it will "tent" for a moment and then snap back to normal. If it takes more than 2 seconds to return to normal and can indicate severe dehydration.

Dehydration is an immediate concern – call the hospital without delay. Animals can go for weeks without eating but no pet can survive for long without drinking normal amounts of water.

What NOT to Do with a Vomiting Dog

1. Do not medicate your pet without talking to us. Many medications, especially antibiotics, exacerbate vomiting. It's may be best to skip medications for a few dosages but it's best to ask.
2. Do not allow the pet to eat or drink anything until there has been no vomiting for 6 to 8 hours.