



Vomiting

Everyone knows what vomiting is and, if you have pets, you've probably seen them do it. Vomiting is not a disease, but a sign of something else. Finding the cause is important, especially if the vomiting becomes a recurring problem or is severe.

You need to discover the cause to know how to treat it properly. The hard part is that many things can cause vomiting. Veterinarians often need to run blood tests and x-ray, ultrasound, or take biopsies to determine the cause.

Possible Causes

- Spoiled food or poisons
- Overeating or eating unfamiliar food
- Diseases of the liver, kidneys, or pancreas
- Irritation or disease of the stomach or intestine such as ulcers or Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)
- Foreign body in the stomach or obstruction of the intestines
- Prolonged constipation
- Infections or parasites
- Dizziness
- Certain drugs
- Food allergy
- Cancer
- Hairballs
- Stress

Mild Cases

Mild signs would be a pet that vomited once or twice, seems to feel fine otherwise, and is still interested in eating. Call us to find out if we think your pet needs an exam (based on what you tell us) or if you can treat it at home.

It's best not to give any medication to your pet unless a vet has recommended it. Some people will give Pepto-Bismol to their dogs. It can be toxic to cats. It isn't very effective so we don't usually recommend it.

Needs Veterinary Visit



The vomiting in some pets is severe enough that your pet needs an exam quickly. This is true if your pet has vomited multiple times within a few hours, is lethargic or listless at

the same time, or is also having diarrhea. Dehydration can develop quickly, especially in cats and small dogs.

If you think your pet has eaten a foreign body (something that won't be digestible) your pet needs an exam. If your pet has vomited blood or is in pain, that is another reason for a trip to the vet. We can give your pet medicine to control the vomiting and help him feel better. It's also important to look for the cause when the situation is serious enough to require a vet visit.

Testing

Initial tests include a blood count, chemistries to look at organs, a urine check, fecal check, and x-rays. Those tests will often diagnose the problem. If not, though, more blood tests (looking for specific diseases), ultrasound, endoscopy (the veterinarian looks at the stomach through a tube that goes through the mouth) or biopsies of the stomach or intestine are the next steps.

Treatment

Treatment is determined based on the cause. Some pets will respond to fluids, if they are dehydrated, and medications to stop vomiting. Some herbs will help soothe irritation in the stomach and intestines. A bland diet sometimes works well. These are general therapies for the vomiting while we treat the underlying cause with specific treatments or surgery geared to correcting the cause.

Some pets seem to vomit in the early morning. Feeding them later at night before going to bed often helps. These pets may have a build-up of acid in their stomach if they go too long without food and a later feeding will control it.

Cats and Hairballs

Many cats that vomit up hairballs don't need any kind of treatment. Once the hairball is up, they are back to normal. Hairballs are usually tubular in shape, full of hair, and cats have a tendency to do it where we'll step on them in our bare feet! You can give your cat commercial hairball remedies or foods designed to reduce hairballs.



Some cats are "vomitters". They vomit once on a semi-regular basis, act fine otherwise, and need no immediate treatment. Often these cats and those who have a chronic hairball problem (unless they are grooming excessively) have an underlying disorder such as IBD, cancer, or food allergies. Biopsies of the intestine are required to diagnose the problem.

Regurgitation

Some situations aren't vomiting at all. The cause is regurgitation; food comes right back up and doesn't even get into the stomach. This happens quickly after your pet eats, and the food is undigested. This is usually a problem with the esophagus and your pet will need an exam.

However, if you have a pet (usually a dog) that gulps its food down quickly and then regurgitates or vomits, it could be due to him swallowing air with his food. In this case, get a bowl designed to slow him down when he eats.

