



ANIMAL CLINIC EAST

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Parvovirus Handout

What is parvo?

Canine parvovirus infects the lining of the intestinal tract resulting in lethargy, vomiting, and bloody diarrhea. Parvovirus is considered a puppy disease (less than 6 months old), but can infect any age dog that doesn't have proper protection either from maternal antibodies or vaccinations. The virus is transmitted by ingestion or contact with infected feces with clinical signs occurring 3-7 days after infection. The virus can survive for years in the environment, only bleach and direct sunlight can kill the virus. Canine parvovirus can only infect members of the canine family (wolves, foxes, coyotes,) it cannot infect cats or humans.

How to treat parvo?

Parvo is diagnosed by a fecal test that can be performed at our clinic in addition to clinical signs. There is no actual treatment against the virus; the main goal of therapy is supportive care. Primary treatment consists of intravenous fluids to help correct dehydration along with intravenous antibiotics to prevent secondary infections. Anti-nausea medications, sugar solutions or amino acids are used in case-by-case situations. The infected dog is kept in our isolation ward to prevent further transmission of the virus to our other patients. The average length of treatment varies and can depend on how compromised the dog was upon intake to the clinic. The dog is discharged once he/she can keep food down without having diarrhea or vomiting.

After care

Dogs can intermittently shed the virus for up to 6 months after infection with the first two weeks being the highest amount shed. During this time, please keep him/her away from public areas such as dog parks or city parks. To avoid infecting your yard with parvo, pick up stools and dispose immediately. Do not allow any contact with unvaccinated dogs since your dog is considered contagious.

When your dog comes home, they need to eat smaller, more frequent meals to prevent nausea. Remember, the intestinal lining was damaged so soft stools may be common for the first 1-2 weeks. Your dog will go home with oral antibiotics and possible nausea or diarrhea medications.

The puppy vaccination series can begin 3-4 weeks after discharge depending on how your dog recovers.