



Symptoms of Pain and Illness in Dogs

by Jennifer Bryant

Dog owners, who recognize the early signs and symptoms of illness or pain in their dogs, will not only relieve their loved one's suffering but may also be able to save themselves an expensive trip to the veterinarian. Not only is it important to recognize these signs early to relieve pain and suffering, but it is much more effective to treat an illness when it is detected early.

The dog owner should keep an accurate and detailed account of their dog's symptoms to help the veterinarian correctly diagnose and effectively treat the dog's illness or condition. Most canine illnesses are detected through a combination of various signs and symptoms:

Temperature, Respiratory Rate and Heart Rate

A newborn puppy will have a temperature of 94-97°

F. which will eventually reach the normal adult body temperature of 101.5° F. at the age of 4 weeks old. Take care when trying to take your dog or puppies temperature as the thermometer can easily be broken off in the canine's rectum. Also any form of excitement can cause the temperature to rise by 2-3° when the dog is actually in normal health. If your dog's temperature reaches 105° or above OR 96° or below please take him/her to the emergency vet immediately!

An adult dog will have a respiratory rate of 15-20 breaths per minute (depending on such variables as size and weight) and a heart rate of 80-120 beats per minute. You can feel for your dog's heartbeat by placing your hand on his/her lower ribcage just behind the elbow. Don't be alarmed if the heartbeat seems irregular compared to a human's heartbeat, it is irregular in many dogs. Have your vet check it out and get used to how it feels when it is normal.

Behavior Changes

Any behavior changes that are not associated with a change in the household atmosphere, such as jealousy over a new pet or child may be an indication of an illness. Signs of behavioral changes may be: • Depression • Anxiety • Fatigue • Sleepiness • Trembling • Falling/Stumbling

If your dog shows any of these signs, he/she needs to be kept under close watch for a few hours, or even a few days, until positive signs develop or he/she has returned to normal. Do not try to

exercise the dog or put him/her in any situation that may cause stress. Most veterinarians will want for you to keep track of when the symptoms first appeared, whether they are getting better or worse, and also whether the symptoms are intermittent, continuous, or increasing in frequency.

Pain

Dogs that are in pain will likely indicate that they are suffering by giving you clues as to where the area of discomfort is. For instance, a dog that has abdominal pain will continually glance toward their belly, bite or lick the area, and will not want to leave his/her bed. The dog may stand hunched over, or take the 'prayer position' which is when a dog gets down on it's forelegs with the hind legs still standing, because of the pain in her abdomen area.

Dogs can not tell you that they are hurting or cry real tears but a dog may vocalize their pain in a different way. A dog that is hurt suddenly (such as being stepped on) will cry out or wimper in pain. This also happens when an external injury or internal injury (such as an organ) is touched. Whining or vocalization that is unprovoked may be caused from an internal injury as well. Some breeds of dogs (such as the American Pit Bull Terrier) have a higher pain threshold and need to be watched more closely for signs of pain. Breeds with a high pain tolerance are more likely to endure the pain without vocalization.

Another clue to pain is a change in temperament. A dog that is in pain may show signs of aggression.

Please take note of this before concluding that a dog has become vicious and let your veterinarian know so that the correct treatment can be administered. Also females in general (even humans!) have days when they are just in a bad mood for no obvious reason. Take note of days of times that these mood swings occur as well as any events that might have triggered them.

Other signs that your dog may be sick:

- Ears: discharge, debris, odor, scratching, crusted tips, twitching or shaking.
- Eyes: redness, swelling or discharge.
- Nose: runny, thickened or colored discharge, crusty.
- Coughing, sneezing, vomiting or gagging.
- Shortness of breath, irregular breathing or prolonged/heavy panting
- Evidence of parasites in the dog's stool, strange color, blood in the stool, or lack of a bowel movement (constipation).
- Loss of appetite or not drinking as much water as normally would.
- Weight Loss.
- Strange color of urine, small amount of urine, straining, dribbling, or not going as frequently as normal.
- Bad odor coming from mouth, ears, or skin.
- Hair loss, wounds, tumors, dander or change of the skin's color.
- Biting of the skin, parasites, scratching or licking the skin frequently.

The preceding article was meant to help educate you to the signs and symptoms of probable pain or sickness in your dog. If any of these symptoms occur over a prolonged period of time, please seek the help of a veterinarian. I hope that this article will help

stress the importance of keeping watch over your dog's health patterns and the importance of keeping an accurate, detailed health record for your veterinarian's convenience.

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Jennifer Bryant is a life-long lover of dogs. Jennifer loves and breeds American Pit Bull Terriers in her North Georgia home with her 2 young children. Her love of dogs has inspired her to create a website for herself (as well as other dog breeders) to advertise their occasional litter of puppies and to educate others with dog breed information and useful articles.

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