

PANCREATITIS

Pancreatitis is inflammation of the pancreas. The pancreas lies within the abdominal cavity beside the small intestine and liver. It produces enzymes that aid in digestion and insulin that regulates blood sugar levels. Pancreatitis can be an acute or chronic disease. It can occur in any age or breed of pet but is most frequent in overweight, middle-aged, female dogs.

Signs of pancreatitis may include pain, vomiting, fever, decreased appetite, and depression. In cats the signs are often vague and may mimic other diseases. In severe cases the pancreas may begin to digest itself and other abdominal organs and cause shock and death. Animals with chronic pancreatitis may lose weight and have voluminous soft stools. Diabetes can occur secondary to prolonged bouts of pancreatitis. Causes of pancreatitis include eating large amounts of fats or other rich foods, infection, blockage of the pancreatic duct, and abdominal injury.

Pancreatitis is relatively easy to diagnosis in dogs using routine blood tests. Unfortunately, these same blood tests are not reliable indicators of pancreatitis in cats so multiple testing is usually required to diagnose the problem in felines. In both dogs and cats x-rays and abdominal ultrasound are sometimes used to diagnose the degree of damage.

Mild cases of pancreatitis can usually be managed at home with oral medications and diet changes. If your pet cannot keep down water or medication given by mouth, he or she will require hospitalization in order to receive injectable medication and fluids. Treatment of pancreatitis usually consists of antibiotics, pain medication, fluids to prevent dehydration, and a bland, low fat diet. It is very important to follow the diet recommendations closely as too rich a diet may lead to a relapse. If you have any questions about your pet's treatment, please do not hesitate to call the clinic.