

Vomiting

Vomiting can be caused by a long list of reasons. It is common in dogs and cats. Vomiting is defined as the forceful ejection of the contents of the stomach and upper intestines. The pet is usually apprehensive and will heave or retch while vomiting. Food and/or a yellow fluid (bile) may be produced.

Vomiting may be caused by a stomach or intestinal issue, or it may be caused by diseases of other organs that are causing toxins to build up in the blood stream. Intestinal problems may include, but are not limited to, hairballs, ulcers, infection, toxins, foreign bodies (toys, coins, rocks, bones, string, etc.), or garbage ingestion. Vomiting may also be a symptom of various other diseases, such as kidney disease, liver disease, cancers, uterine infection, diabetes, viral infection, thyroid disease (usually in cats), or hormonal deficiencies.

As you can see, understanding why a pet is vomiting can be difficult. To help us determine the cause, a complete history and physical exam is essential. Inquiries about the behavior and tendencies of your pet, when the vomiting occurs in relation to eating, what the vomit produces, and other questions may help us determine the cause and how to treat a patient. Although vomiting can be treated without making a diagnosis, testing is necessary to help determine the cause and proceed with treatment. A blood test, urine test, x-rays, ultrasound examination are useful in helping determine a diagnosis and course of action.

If a pet vomits only occasionally, the results of the examination and tests may not produce absolute answers. Many healthy dogs and cats are known to vomit on occasion without an identifiable cause. Animals are like humans—sometimes we have an upset stomach and for whatever reason may vomit. Oftentimes, it is nothing to get too concerned about.

Treatment for vomiting depends on the cause. Sometimes, just a simple medication that calms and settles the stomach provides relief and will help the pet feel better. For cats with hairballs, a special food or Laxatone will help. Other times, the vomiting may be so continuous and intense that more aggressive treatment may be necessary—perhaps hospitalization or even surgery.