

ASK OUR VETERINARIANS



What is parvovirus?

Parvovirus is a type of virus that is seen in many different species of animals. However, each type of animal typically has their own specific virus causing infection, meaning dogs cannot infect cats with the virus and vice versa. Now in dogs, parvovirus is a common infection that is most often seen in our young or unvaccinated dogs. The virus affects the rapidly growing cells of the bone marrow and intestines in particular, depressing the dog's immune system as well as killing regions of the intestinal wall. Once infected, signs are usually seen in about 7 days and include profuse diarrhea, vomiting, lethargy, and decreased appetite. The parvovirus itself is shed heavily in the stool of a sick dog and is very resistant to common disinfectants. Therefore, we assume that most public dog areas could be potentially harboring the virus. To diagnose this disease, most commonly we obtain a fecal sample to run a test to detect antibodies, or a specific immune response to parvovirus. To treat parvovirus, most dogs will need to be hospitalized in isolation for IV fluids, antibiotics, and symptomatic care, to keep up with the severe vomiting and diarrhea seen with the disease. If caught early, the chance of survival is much better. Even after leaving the hospital, we recommend the dog be isolated from other dogs for a period of time, and potentially infected areas at home should be disinfected with dilute bleach solution. Ultimately, there is good news about this disease. It is preventable because the vaccine for it is highly effective! Therefore, dogs should receive their puppy series vaccinations at 8, 12, and 16 weeks of age and continue regular vaccination through adulthood. In addition, avoiding public dog areas with young puppies prior to completing their vaccine series is recommended to prevent exposure to this nasty disease.

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