



**My dog has
been diagnosed with**

kidney disease

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What is kidney disease?

Chronic kidney disease (also called chronic renal failure) is a common illness in dogs, it can develop at any age but is most prevalent in older animals. Diseased kidneys are less efficient at filtering the blood and tend to pass too much water to the bladder.

What are the initial symptoms of kidney disease?

Indicators of kidney disease include: weight loss, decreased appetite, tiredness, vomiting, and an increase in the amount your dog drinks and how often they pass urine.

What causes kidney disease?

Kidney disease comes about as a result of small structures within the kidney, called nephrons, ceasing to function. This can happen for a number of reasons, including infection or ingestion of a toxin, however in many cases the underlying cause of kidney disease is not known. Long term kidney disease can be brought about by a shorter term condition which leaves the kidney damaged (such as ingestion of a toxin). Some kidney disease is hereditary, and certain breeds are more likely to develop it.



Is there a cure?

Chronic kidney disease cannot be cured or reversed, but management will improve the symptoms and slow progression of the disease. The earlier the disease is identified, the more successful efforts to curtail it will be.

How is kidney disease managed?

Your dog will likely need a special diet, this will help reduce the strain on the kidneys by reducing the amounts of certain substances the kidneys have to filter out of the blood. Your dog may need dietary supplements, injections and/or fluid therapy to make up for the kidneys not doing their job. In some cases, increased blood pressure contributes to the severity of kidney disease, so your dog may be prescribed oral medication to reduce blood pressure. Your vet will need to keep a close eye on the development of your dog's condition and any possible complications, such as urinary tract infections. As kidney disease is progressive, your dog may need more, or different, treatment as time goes on.

Are there any complications to look out for?

You should keep an eye out for your dog losing weight or eating less, especially if a special diet is required. Vomiting and diarrhoea are more serious signs than in healthy dogs, as dogs with kidney disease are at higher risk from dehydration. As kidney disease progresses it can lead to a weakening of your dog's bones, associated with an increased risk of fractures. This is sometimes referred to as 'rubber jaw syndrome' as it can cause facial deformities. In the later stages of kidney disease your dog may experience seizures—you should call your vet as soon as possible if you think your dog has had a seizure.

What if my dog won't eat a special diet?

Dogs are not always keen to change their eating habits and may have favourite foods. It is often necessary to introduce a new diet gradually by mixing it with the previous food and increasing the proportion of the new diet over time. Alternatively, you could use the new food as treats initially to increase desirability to your dog. However it is important that your dog continues to eat well, therefore you should avoid starving your dog in order to 'force' them to eat the new diet. If your dog does not eat well, they may require a feeding tube; this will involve a minor surgery but most dogs tolerate this well. Feeding tubes require some care and attention at home, and your vet will instruct you on this if necessary. Your dog may be prescribed an appetite stimulant, especially if they suffer from nausea or vomiting.

Will my dog need medication for the rest of their life?

If your dog has been diagnosed with early stage chronic kidney disease, dietary management alone may be enough to keep them comfortable and stall the development of later stage disease. Once kidney disease reaches a certain stage, other medical management is very likely to be required and, as the condition is irreversible, once this stage is reached your dog will need treatment indefinitely. In many cases treatment provides a good quality and length of life; your vet will be able to advise you on the extent and stage of your dog's condition.

What are the long-term considerations?

Regular check-ups will be required so that your vet can monitor the progression of your



dog's illness and the effectiveness of any treatment used. These could be twice a year, or as often as twice a month if your vet needs to introduce and assess new medication.

Will my dog need to be put to sleep?

Most dogs with chronic kidney disease are able to live fairly normal and happy lives thanks to veterinary intervention. This leaflet aims to cover all bases, and may seem like a lot of information to take in at once, but many cases will not involve all of the complications and treatments mentioned within. Once kidney disease reaches the very late stages you may need to talk to your vet about your pet's quality of life, and they will be able to guide you through any difficult decisions that have to be made.

Whom do I contact if I want to know more?

If you have any questions about the management of kidney disease or concerns about your dog's health, contact your own vet. They will know your dog's medical history and will be able to discuss your dog's health and care with you.



PetSavers is dedicated to improving the health of the nation's pets. We do this by funding clinical research projects and Master's degrees by research.

Clinical research projects give us a better understanding of pets' illnesses. This leads to improved diagnosis and treatment so that pets can have longer and healthier lives.

A Master's degree by research develops the skills of vets so they can apply the results of the research and their expertise to pets as soon as possible.

No experimental animals are used in PetSavers studies.

In the past 40 years, PetSavers has given over £2 million towards these goals. Over this time the need for funding has become even greater and we rely on the support of vets, nurses and pet owners.

By helping PetSavers, you can make sure that our knowledge of small animal medicine and surgery is improved. Please help us to continue funding these important research projects.

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