



Hypothyroidism

Hypothyroidism is a common endocrine disorder in dogs. It creates a wide range of symptoms resulting from the underproduction of hormones by the thyroid gland (located in the throat). The thyroid hormone's main function is to set the pet's metabolic rate at the right pace. Too much hormone causes an overactive metabolism and too little causes a sluggish metabolism. Hypothyroidism sets your dog's "idle system" on low. This can cause abnormalities in a variety of body systems and organs. Hypothyroidism usually occurs because the thyroid gland was damaged by inflammation of the gland, causing it to no longer produce enough thyroid hormone. Hypothyroidism is usually associated with a number of physical signs.

Affected dogs often experience weight gain, loss of energy and increased shedding or hair loss. Hair is often lost on the tail giving the appearance of a "rat tail." Hypothyroid pets are also more vulnerable to infections.

Hypothyroidism is diagnosed with a blood test. Fortunately, treatment is easy. Your dog needs to be given a thyroid hormone supplement every day. These are available in tablet or chewable forms. In the beginning, we will schedule several follow-up blood work visits to monitor your dog's thyroid levels to ensure the proper dose is supplied. Once the proper dose of medication has been determined, your dog will need to have thyroid levels tested every 6-12 months or sooner if problems arise. If your dog has related skin or ear problems, we may also recommend medications or treatments for these conditions. Once treatment begins, most people notice that their dog is more active within one or two weeks and losing weight within four to eight weeks after starting the medication. Skin and hair concerns take a little longer to resolve but should improve noticeably within two to three months.

Important Points

For the success of this treatment it is very important that you consistently administer your dog's medication as directed by your doctor. Monitor the number of pills you have available and call at least two days in advance to arrange for a refill.

Please contact us immediately if you notice:

- Elevated excitability or restlessness
- Excess panting
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Decreased activity (more so than normal)
- Infections (especially of the ears and skin)
- Increased hair loss
- Flaky or greasy skin
- Increased water intake or increased urination

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