

Bloat - Know the symptoms, know what to do!

Bloat is fatal and it is urgent you know what to do to save your Great Dane!

The technical name for bloat is "Gastric Dilatation-Volvulus" ("GDV"). Bloating of the stomach is often related to swallowed air (although food and fluid can also be present). It usually happens when there's an abnormal accumulation of air, fluid, and/or foam in the stomach ("gastric dilatation"). Stress can be a significant contributing factor also. Bloat can occur with or without "volvulus" (twisting). As the stomach swells, it may rotate 90° to 360°, twisting between its fixed attachments at the esophagus (food tube) and at the duodenum (the upper intestine). The twisting stomach traps air, food, and water in the stomach. The bloated stomach obstructs veins in the abdomen, leading to low blood pressure, shock, and damage to internal organs. The combined effect can quickly kill a dog.

Your vet may recommend having your puppies stomach tacked during the spay or neuter procedure. This may help prevent Bloat, but this choice is ultimately yours!

If your dog begins to show signs of bloat distress, you only have a limited amount of time! Always keep a product with simethicone on hand (e.g., Mylanta Gas (not regular Mylanta), Gas-X, etc.) in case your dog has gas. If you can reduce or slow the gas, you've probably bought yourself a little more time to get to a vet if your dog is bloating.

Be prepared! Know in advance what you would do if your dog bloated

Causes

- ◆ **Stress**
 - ◆ Dog shows, mating, whelping, boarding, change in routine, new dog in household, etc.
 - ◆ Activities that result in gulping air
- ◆ **Eating habits, especially...**
 - ◆ Elevated food bowls
 - ◆ Rapid eating
 - ◆ Eating dry foods that contain citric acid as a preservative (the risk is even worse if the owner moistens the food)
 - ◆ Eating dry foods that contain fat among the first four ingredients
 - ◆ Insufficient pancreatic enzymes, such as Trypsin (a pancreatic enzyme present in meat)
Dogs with untreated Exocrine Pancreatic Insufficiency (EPI) and/or Small Intestinal Bacterial Overgrowth (SIBO) generally produce more gas and thus are at greater risk
 - ◆ Dilution of gastric juices necessary for complete digestion by drinking too much water before or after eating
 - ◆ Eating gas-producing foods (especially soybean products, brewer's yeast, and alfalfa)
 - ◆ Drinking too much water too quickly (can cause gulping of air)
- ◆ **Exercise before and especially after eating**

Symptoms

Typical symptoms often include some (but not necessarily all) of the following, according to the links below. Unfortunately, from the onset of the first symptoms you have very little time (sometimes minutes, sometimes hours) to get immediate medical attention for your dog. Know your dog and know when it's not acting right.

- ◆ **Attempts to vomit (usually unsuccessful); may occur every 5-30 minutes**
 - ◆ This seems to be one of the most common symptoms & has been referred to as the **"hallmark symptom"**
 - ◆ "Unsuccessful vomiting" means either nothing comes up or possibly just foam and/or mucous comes up
 - ◆ Some have reported that it can sound like a repeated cough
- ◆ **Doesn't act like usual self**
 - ◆ Perhaps the earliest warning sign and may be the only sign that almost always occurs
 - ◆ We've had several reports that dogs who bloated asked to go outside in the middle of the night. If this is combined with frequent attempts to vomit, and if your dog doesn't typically ask to go outside in the middle of the night, bloat is a very real possibility.
- ◆ **Significant anxiety and restlessness**

One of the earliest warning signs and seems fairly typical
- ◆ **"Hunched up" or "roached up" appearance**

This seems to occur fairly frequently
- ◆ **Lack of normal gurgling and digestive sounds in the tummy**
 - ◆ Many dog owners report this after putting their ear to their dog's tummy.
 - ◆ If your dog shows any bloat symptoms, you may want to try this immediately.
- ◆ **Bloated abdomen that may feel tight (like a drum)**

Despite the term "bloat," many times this symptom never occurs or is not apparent
- ◆ **Pale or off-color gums**

Dark red in early stages; white or blue in later stages
- ◆ **Coughing**
- ◆ **Unproductive gagging**
- ◆ **Heavy salivating or drooling**
- ◆ **Foamy mucous around the lips, or vomiting foamy mucous**
- ◆ **Unproductive attempts to defecate**
- ◆ **Whining**
- ◆ **Pacing**
- ◆ **Licking the air**
- ◆ **Seeking a hiding place**
- ◆ **Looking at their side or other evidence of abdominal pain or discomfort**
- ◆ **May refuse to lie down or even sit down**
- ◆ **May stand spread-legged**
- ◆ **May curl up in a ball or go into a praying or crouched position**
- ◆ **May attempt to eat small stones and twigs**
- ◆ **Drinking excessively**
- ◆ **Heavy or rapid panting**
- ◆ **Shallow breathing**
- ◆ **Cold mouth membranes**
- ◆ **Apparent weakness; unable to stand or has a spread-legged stance**

Especially in advanced stage
- ◆ **Accelerated heartbeat**

Heart rate increases as bloating progresses
- ◆ **Weak pulse**
- ◆ **Collapse**

Quick Reference Guide For GDV BLOAT

Vet's Emergency Telephone Number...

| | What Is Happening | What The Dog Does | What You Should Do | Treatment |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| Stress ▶▶▶▶ Excitement ▶▶▶▶ Vigorous Exercise ▶▶▶▶ Large Meals ▶▶▶▶ Long Drink ▶▶▶▶ Swallowed Air ▶▶▶▶ Familial Tendency ▶▶▶▶ | Stomach function is normal. Gas accumulates in the stomach but the stomach does not empty as it should. | Dog behaves as usual. Seems slightly uncomfortable. | Keep the dog quiet; Do not leave the dog alone; Give Antacid if your vet agrees. Be aware of Phase I symptoms. | During this period the dog may recover without going on to develop Gastric Volvulus. |
| PHASE I GDV | Stomach starts to dilate. (Gastric Dilatation) Stomach twists. (Gastric Volvulus) | Anxious, restless, pacing; Trying to vomit-may bring up stiff white foam but no food; Salivating; Abdomen may be swollen. | Call your vet, tell him what you suspect and why. Take the dog to the vet without further delay. | During this period the dog may recover if your vet releases the pressure with a stomach tube. |
| PHASE II GDV | Blood supply to part of stomach is cut off. Stomach tissue is damaged. Portal vein, vena cava and splenic vein become compressed and twisted. Spleen becomes engorged. Shock begins to develop | Very restless; whining & panting; Salivating copiously; Tries to vomit every 2-3 min; Stands with legs apart & head hanging down; Abdomen swollen & sounds hollow if tapped; Gums dark red; Heart rate 80-100 beats/min; Temperature raised (104°F) | Get someone to tell your vet you are on your way and why. Take the dog to the vet as quickly as possible. | During this period the vet will need to relieve the stomach pressure, start an intravenous drip and perform surgery to untwist the stomach. |
| PHASE III GDV | Spleen and stomach tissue become Necrotic. Shock now very severe. Heart failure develops. Shock now irreversible. Death | Unable to stand or stands shakily with legs apart; Abdomen very swollen; Breathing shallow; Gums white or blue; Heart rate over 100 beats/minute; Pulse very weak; Temperature drops (98°F) | Death is imminent. Get someone to tell your vet you are your way and why. Take the dog to the vet as quickly as possible. | As well as doing everything above, the vet will need to remove part of the stomach and the spleen. He will also need to use powerful drugs to counteract shock. It is no longer possible to save the dog's life. |

