

CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE IN DOGS

by Skye Patterson - ©Revised 11-Sep-14

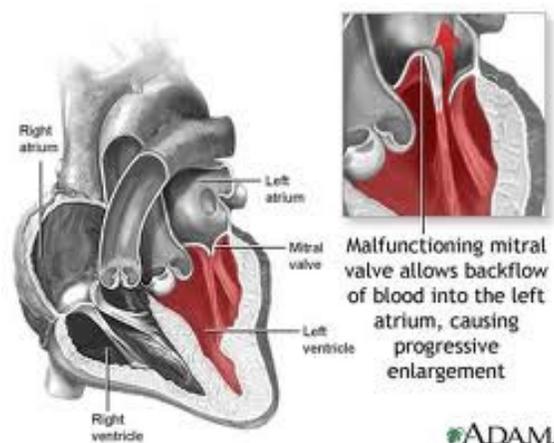
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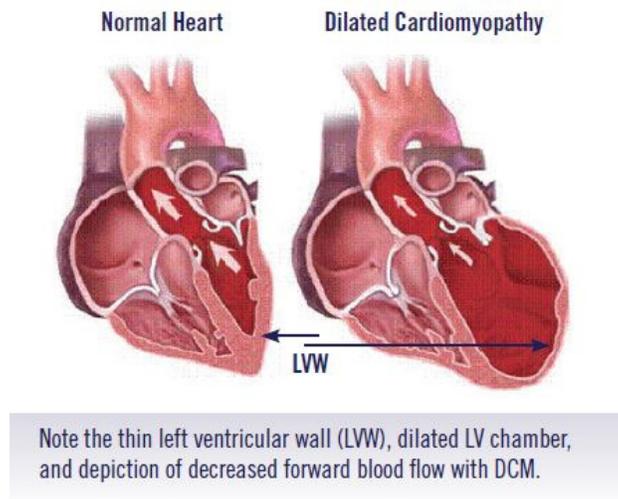
Congestive heart failure is the inability of the heart to provide adequate circulation to meet the body's needs. It is the end result of a weakened heart muscle. The health of the liver, kidneys, lungs, and other organs is impaired by the circulatory failure, resulting in a problem involving multiple organs.

A diseased heart can compensate for many months or years without signs of failure. When failure does occur, it may appear suddenly and unexpectedly-sometimes immediately after strenuous exercise, when the heart is unable to keep up with the body's demands.

In toy and small-breed dogs, chronic valvular disease with mitral regurgitation is the most common cause of congestive heart failure.



In large-breed dogs it is dilated cardiomyopathy.



The early signs of congestive heart failure are tiring easily, a decrease in activity level, and intermittent coughing. The coughing occurs during periods of exertion or excitement. It also tends to occur at night, usually about two hours after the dog goes to bed. Dogs may be restless-pacing instead of quickly settling down to sleep.

These early signs are nonspecific and may even be considered normal for the dog's age. As heart failure progresses the dog develops other signs, such as lack of appetite, rapid breathing, abdominal swelling, and a marked loss of weight.

Because the heart no longer pumps effectively, blood backs up in the lungs, liver, legs, and other organs. Increased pressure in the veins causes fluid to leak into the lungs and peritoneal cavity. Fluid in the lungs is the cause of the coughing. A rapid accumulation of fluid in the small airways can cause the dog to cough up a bubbly red fluid, a condition called pulmonary edema. Pulmonary edema indicates failure of the left ventricle.

With failure of the right ventricle, fluid leaks into the abdomen, giving the belly a characteristic swelling or potbellied appearance (called ascites). This may be accompanied by swelling of the legs (dependent edema). An accumulation of fluid in the chest cavity (pleural effusion) also occurs with right-sided heart failure.

In the late stages of congestive heart failure the dog sits with his elbows spread and his head extended. Breathing is labored. The pulse is rapid, thready, and often irregular. The mucous membranes of the gums and tongue are bluish-gray and cool. A thrill may be felt over the chest. Fainting can occur with stress or exertion.

An accurate diagnosis is established through chest X-rays, ECG, echocardiography, and other tests (such as a heartworm antigen test) as indicated.

It is important to correct any underlying cause whenever possible. Heartworms, bacterial endocarditis, and some forms of congenital heart disease are potentially curable if they are treated before the heart is damaged.

Treatment of congestive heart failure involves feeding the dog a low-salt diet, restricting exercise, and giving appropriate medications to increase heart function and prevent cardiac arrhythmias.

Most commercial diets contain excessive amounts of salt. Exercise is beneficial, but only for dogs who are not symptomatic. If symptoms such as easy tiring, coughing, or rapid breathing appear with exercise, do not allow your dog to engage in activities that elicit these symptoms.

Various drugs are available that increase the force and contraction of the heart muscle or decrease the workload. Talk with your veterinarian about them and educate yourself on the potential side effects they may have for your dog. For more serious arrhythmia, a pacemaker implant may help. Also make sure there aren't underlying electrolyte or metabolic problems that are triggering an attack.

Dogs with congestive heart failure may benefit from vitamin-B supplements and taurine or carnitine. Coenzyme Q is another supplement that may help dogs with cardiac problems.

With proper treatment, a dog with congestive heart failure can live a longer and more comfortable life. However, heart disease requires close monitoring. You will need to return to your veterinarian regularly for checkups.

Information taken from:

<http://pets.webmd.com/dogs/congestive-heart-failure-dogs>

<http://healthypets.mercola.com/sites/healthypets/archive/2012/06/18/heart-disease-causes-of-dogs.aspx>

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SUPPLEMENTS, ESSENTIAL OILS, DIET TO HELP DOGS WITH CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE *

Taurine is an amino acid that is good for the heart. Taurine deficiency may be linked to feeding certain lamb and rice diets, very low-protein diets, high-fiber diets, or vegetarian diets. Studies suggest that taurine supplementation may be helpful for dogs with heart failure even when no deficiency exists. Certain breeds of dogs have been found to develop dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM) that is linked to taurine deficiency. Affected breeds include the American Cocker Spaniel, Portuguese Water Dog, Newfoundland and Golden Retriever. Other breeds that may be affected include the Scottish Terrier, Border Collie, Doberman Pinscher, and potentially other large and giant breeds as well. It is less likely that DCM in the Doberman Pinscher and Boxer is related to taurine deficiency, though supplementation will not hurt. **Give as much as 250 mg to a small dog, 500 mg to a medium dog and 750 mg to a large dog, twice a day.** Taurine is best given on an empty stomach. Note that taurine is abundant in raw meat, particularly heart, but much is lost when the meat is cooked.

Carnitine is another amino acid that helps to keep the heart strong. Certain breeds, particularly Boxers, as well as Cocker Spaniels, Springer Spaniels, and Doberman Pinschers, may be affected by dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM) that is linked to carnitine deficiency, and improves when supplements are given. Even when there is sufficient carnitine in the diet and blood levels are normal, providing additional carnitine may improve cardiac function. For Boxers and Cocker Spaniels who have DCM, you can give as much as 20 to 45 mg per pound of body weight daily. For other breeds, or dogs who do not have DCM, you can give as much as **500 mg to a small dog, 1,000 mg to a medium dog and 2,000 mg to a large dog, twice a day**, though less is OK (this supplement is expensive). The free form type is best; never use synthetic forms (D-Carnitine or DL-Carnitine), which can cause serious side effects. Note that carnitine is abundant in red meat (especially beef and lamb, with about 20-40 mg per ounce), with higher amounts in mutton, half as much in pork, and low amounts in poultry and organ meats. For senior dogs, a combination of L-Carnitine and Acetyl-L-Carnitine may work best; use together at the rate of 2-3 mg each per pound of body weight. All amino acid supplements are best given on an empty stomach.

Arginine is another amino acid that may provide beneficial effects for dogs with CHF (congestive heart failure) by improving endothelial function and cardiac output, and may result in improved exercise tolerance and decreased dyspnea (shortness of breath). Give as much as 100 mg per pound of body weight daily.

The Omega 3 Fish Oil Blend provides the omega-3 fatty acids EPA and DHA that can be beneficial for heart disease. These omega-3 fatty acids reduce inflammation and improve cardiac cachexia (lean muscle loss/muscle wasting), and may help with anorexia (loss of appetite) and arrhythmias. Dogs with heart failure have lower concentrations of EPA and DHA in their blood.

Children's Chewable Vitamins/Minerals/AntiOxidants/Cellular Energy Complex will provide important support of healthy cell function/reproduction, help reduce inflammation, support cellular energy, and protect against free radical damage

For information on dose amounts based on weight of dog/cat for supplements, please see "Supplements for Dogs" file found at www.thedogoil.com

Essential Oil Support: Blend of 1 drop each of Cypress, Helichrysum, Lavender and Marjoram with added Teaspoon of Fractionated Coconut Oil (FCO). You can increase amount to make a supply. Use of an old doTERRA bottle with added spray top can be helpful. Apply topically to the chest area over the heart 2-3X/day (about 2-3 drops of mix). Also apply 1-2 drops to the bottom of each back paw between/on side of toe pads at least two times a day.

The addition of 1-2 drops of Frankincense mixed into wet food 2X/day is very supportive.

DIET:

Please note that Veterinarian prescription diets are full of ingredients that are challenging to dog's health. In particular grains (corn, wheat, soy) which increase inflammation, which is something to avoid with dogs suffering from heart disease; along with using poor quality meat proteins, which is non-supportive of these dogs. Diets for dogs with heart disease should be high in quality **protein**, particularly meat, which supplies amino acids that are good for the heart and helps to preserve lean body mass. Beef heart and other heart meats may be particularly beneficial. The amount of fat in the diet may need to be increased for dogs with cardiac cachexia (muscle wasting), or decreased for dogs that are overweight, but should remain moderate rather than low.

Sodium should be moderately restricted in early stages of heart disease, and more severely restricted in late stages (severe restriction may actually be harmful in early stages).

If you are feeding a Veterinarian prescription diet for heart disease, you can improve the quality of the diet by adding high-protein animal-source foods such as meat, eggs and dairy, but be careful not to add foods that are high in sodium, such as cottage cheese and canned fish. Instead of going with a low quality food found in Veterinarian prescription diets to deal with the need to reduce sodium, you can accomplish this much more healthily by feeding a homemade diet. To find information about nutrition and a good supportive diet that is free of grains (corn, wheat, soy) go to the file: Canine Nutrition on the website: www.thedogoiler.com. Focus on high quality grain free canned or even better would be a raw diet.

*These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. These products are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent disease.

WARNING: Many essential oils on the market contain synthetics which should not be used. Only certified pure natural therapeutic grade essential oils should be used for safe and reliable results.

Note: All Blends/Complexes/Supplements: I will use the descriptive names, not the proprietary registered names.

To learn about the brand of essential oils and supplements that I recommend for your family and pets and how to purchase these powerful natural products at the best available prices go to: <http://www.thedogoiler.com/>

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