

What can I do to keep my dog healthy?

While people can develop heart disease because of poor diet and lack of exercise, it is not as often the cause for our dogs. Here are some tips to help catch it early:

- Take note of changes in your dog as he or she ages.
- Watch for changes in your dog's appetite and energy level.
- Keep your dog at a normal, healthy body weight. Know your dog's breed or mix of breeds and understand his/her risk of heart disease.
- Take your dog in for regular checkups as recommended by your veterinarian. This is one of the most important ways you can care for your dog—heart disease is just one of many conditions that, if caught early, can be treated effectively.

If you're worried about your pet developing heart disease, your best bet is to have a conversation with your veterinarian.

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Canine health

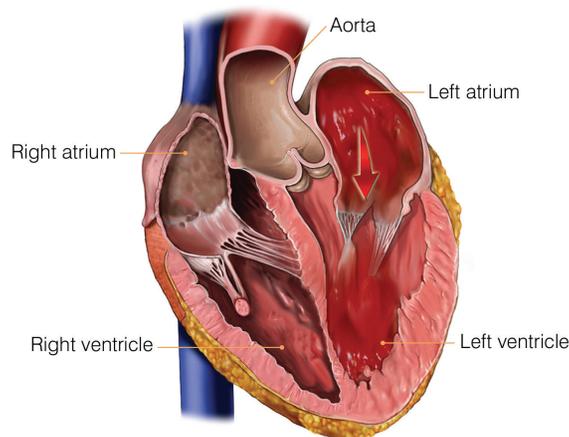
Heart disease and dogs. The facts about heart health.

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What you need to know about your dog's heart health

Just like your heart, your dog's heart is responsible for pumping blood to different parts of the body, helping organs and muscles function properly and stay healthy. It needs to be in good condition to do its job effectively. That's why it is important for you to understand your dog's heart health. Taking your dog to the veterinarian for regular checkups is the first step.



During your dog's examination, the veterinarian will check for signs of possible heart disease, such as difficulty breathing, coughing or the presence of a heart murmur. This can be a challenge, as many dogs that have heart disease may not show any signs or symptoms. In fact, dogs can have heart disease for years before you notice something is wrong.

Risks and symptoms

Dogs are most commonly affected by mitral valve disease and dilated cardiomyopathy. Mitral valve disease occurs when the mitral valve, located between the left atrium and left ventricle, thickens and becomes distorted. As a result, the valve starts to leak, allowing blood to flow in the wrong direction. Dilated cardiomyopathy, on the other hand, occurs when the heart muscle becomes weak, reducing its ability to pump blood effectively. Both can lead to heart failure.

These types of heart disease can be found in many dog breeds, and the most commonly affected breeds include:

Mitral valve disease

- Cavalier King Charles spaniel
- Poodle
- Schnauzer
- Chihuahua
- Fox terrier

Dilated cardiomyopathy

- Doberman pinscher
- Boxer
- Great Dane
- Dalmatian
- Irish wolfhound
- Saint Bernard

It's easy to confuse the signs of heart disease with those of aging, so it's important to keep an eye on your dog and call your veterinarian if your dog:

- Is tired or lethargic and doesn't want to exercise or play.
- Has difficulty breathing or is coughing.
- Collapses or faints.

Sometimes, however, your veterinarian is the only one who can spot the more subtle signs of heart disease, such as irregular heart sounds or irregular rhythms.

Diagnosis

If your veterinarian suspects that your dog has heart disease, he or she will perform a complete physical exam and pay close attention to the heart to find clues as to whether your pet has any heart-related problems. Heart disease doesn't always cause murmurs, so some additional tests may be performed:

- X-rays to check for abnormalities in the heart and lungs
- Cardiopet® proBNP Test, a blood test to evaluate heart disease
- A blood pressure test to assess the circulatory system
- An electrocardiograph (ECG) to record electrical activity of the heart
- An echocardiogram (ultrasound) to evaluate heart structure and function

Treatment

If your dog is diagnosed with heart disease, there are several possible treatment plans:

- Dietary changes, such as a low-sodium diet or recommended dietary supplements
- Diuretics which help clear excess fluids built up due to poor circulation
- Medications to relax blood vessels, aid blood flow and help the heart function more efficiently

Treatment for heart disease will vary based on the needs of each individual dog. With early detection, monitoring and the right treatment, your dog can live a healthy, happy life for years to come. Your veterinarian will develop a plan that is right for you and your pet.

Did you know that on average, a dog's heart beats around 70–120 times per minute?

That's an average of 144,000 beats per day!



In comparison, a human heart averages only 72 beats per minute and 104,000 times per day.

