



## Parvovirus

Canine Parvovirus (Parvo) is very contagious among dogs and can be prevented by vaccination.

**Cause:** Parvovirus is highly concentrated in the feces of infected animals. It persists in the environment under a variety of conditions and is resistant to many common disinfectants. Because the virus is so resilient, it can be carried on objects such as shoes, clothing, and other material that touch infected substances. Transmission commonly occurs when a dog swallows the virus. The virus can be inactivated by removing all organic matter, then cleaning with a 1:20 dilution of household bleach.

**Signs:** The primary signs involve the gastrointestinal (GI) system and include decreased appetite, severe vomiting, lethargy, profuse diarrhea that may be bloody. Affected dogs can quickly become severely dehydrated and are often very weak.

**Diagnostic Tests:**

-Specific tests for parvovirus are done on fecal samples. These tests can be done in the veterinary clinic and are very reliable.

-A complete blood count may show low numbers of certain white blood cells and platelets. Anemia may be detected and can be severe.

-A serum (blood) biochemistry panel may show low blood protein levels and electrolyte imbalances from the vomiting and diarrhea.

-X rays of the abdomen help to rule out other causes of the GI signs.

**Treatment:** If Parvovirus infection is suspected, the dog should be isolated from other animals due to the highly contagious nature of the virus. Hospitalized animals are quarantined in our closely monitored isolation ward. Treatment involved supportive care including IV fluids, anti-vomiting medications, antibiotics for secondary bacterial infections, and sometimes blood transfusions if anemia is severe. Severely ill dogs may develop sepsis, a widespread bacterial infection. This occurs when bacteria normally confined to the GI tract are released into the bloodstream as a result of severe damage caused by the parvovirus.

**Follow-up Care:** Dogs that recover from parvovirus usually have long lasting protection from reinfection. Regular vaccination is recommended to maintain good immunity.

**Prognosis:** Prognosis is guarded (uncertain) for dogs with prolonged illness. Prognosis is poor for dogs with sepsis.

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