

DIABETES MELLITUS

PET CARE SHEET

The Pancreas is an organ with the abdomen. The two main functions of the pancreas are to produce enzymes involved with digestion and hormones (the most important of which is insulin) primarily involved with the use and metabolism of sugar (glucose).

Diabetes Mellitus (DM) often simply called Diabetes is a disease that affects dogs and cats. It is caused by a deficiency of insulin that results in the inability of the body's tissues and organs to properly utilize glucose. When glucose is not used properly by the body, high levels of sugar develop in the blood and body – as is the case with human diabetics. There are two types of Diabetes – Type 1 and Type 2 although treatment is generally the same for both types. In dogs, diabetes mellitus is commonly a permanent disorder, whereas in cats a short-term (transient) and reversible forms can exist.

Diabetes mellitus is one of the most common endocrine (hormonal) disorders in cats and dogs, usually affecting middle aged to older pets. Some breeds of dogs seem to have a higher risk of developing it and in dogs, females are more commonly affected, whereas in cats, males are more commonly affected. Causes of the disorder can include a genetic susceptibility, infectious diseases, immune system abnormalities, hormonal diseases, obesity, and in female dogs it may be associated with intact ovaries ie non spayed dogs. Symptoms can vary from patient to patient and are often common to several other diseases. Common early signs include an increase in thirst and urination, weight loss and an increase in appetite. Later vomiting and sluggishness can be noted.

Blood and urine tests are required for a positive diagnosis

LIVING WITH THE DIAGNOSIS

Untreated Diabetes can be a serious and life threatening disease, however, most diabetic animals that are diagnosed and treated properly and who respond well to treatment can live a normal or near normal life-span with a good quality of life. Managing a diabetic pet requires a good commitment of time, education, observation and follow up care.

Your pet will require insulin injections as directed by your Veterinary Surgeon and another very important factor in a diabetic animal's life is routine. Ideally meals and treatments are given close to the same time as possible each day. A consistent amount of controlled daily exercise (general strenuous exercise should be avoided) is ideal for dogs, provided this is tolerated by the dog. A good daily routine of eating and exercising should help prevent fluctuations in blood sugar levels. Your veterinary surgeon or diabetic nurse will be able to give you detailed instructions on the proper handling, administration and disposal of insulin. At this time you can also be given advice by the veterinary team regarding an ideal diet for your pet. Always provide unlimited access to fresh water. During the first few months after an animal is diagnosed, several trips to either see the veterinary surgeon or the Diabetic Nurse will be required for rechecking and tailoring of the treatment. The Diabetic consult clinic with the Diabetic Nurse offers appointments to run through injection technique and other valuable information that you will need to know. We also offer a support pack containing a book, DVD and diabetic diary to assist you in managing your pet. **Author Sharon Filmer RVN Diabetic Nurse**

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