



ABOUT THE DISEASE

Myasthenia gravis (MG) is an uncommon autoimmune disease seen in canine patients. *MG* decreases the function of muscles by affecting nerve receptors responsible for function. This disease can develop at any time but is often seen between 3-9 years of age.

Symptoms often include:

- Weakness of all four legs, especially after exercise.
- Megaesophagus – passive dilation of the esophagus causing regurgitation of food.
 - Occasionally causes excessive salivation.
 - Please see the *Megaesophagus* document for additional information.
- Possibly muscle tremors, voice changes, dilated pupils, and/or coughing.

In rare circumstances, *MG* can be associated with other diseases such as some types of cancer or hypothyroidism. Please see the *Hypothyroidism* document for additional information.

OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS

A specialty test exists which determines the presence of an antibody produced against the acetylcholine receptor (AChR). This antibody is present in cases of *MG*. It is the diagnostic of choice and requires blood to be sent to a specialty laboratory.

X-rays (radiographs) are often taken of the chest to determine if esophageal dilation (megaesophagus) is present.

Routine in-house laboratory testing is often used to assess overall health of the patient, rather than to diagnose the condition.

TREATMENT

The only effective treatment for *MG* are medications that suppress the immune system. Most often, patients are placed on exogenous glucocorticoids (steroids) but other medications can be attempted if there is a poor initial response.

Please see the document for *Megaesophagus* for additional information on management.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- The most challenging aspect of *MG* is when patients develop megaesophagus and require life-long management.
- This is an autoimmune disease, and many patients will require immunosuppressive drugs for most of their lives.
- Recheck regularly for medication adjustments based on therapeutic improvement or decline.