



## GASTRIC DILATION & VOLVULUS

### ABOUT THE DISEASE

**Gastric dilatation and volvulus (GDV)** occurs when the stomach begins to twist on its axis, which then fills with swallowed air as patients become more nauseated. As the twist worsens, the swallowed air cannot escape through belching or by entering the intestine. As the distension worsens, blood flow to the heart, stomach, and spleen can become compromised. Within as little as 4-6 hours, patients may suffer abnormal/irregular heart rhythms (arrhythmias), life-threatening shock, and even death.

Many tall tales exist on what leads **GDV** to develop. However, there is no one single risk factor for the development of **GDV**, except for genetics as the most consistent risk. If a patient in the pedigree develops a **GDV**, then it increases the chances of other dogs in that pedigree.

Large breed, deep-chested canine patients are usually affected by this condition. Commonly affected breeds are the Great Dane, Saint Bernard, Boxer, Doberman Pinscher, Standard Poodle, German Shepherd, Labrador Retriever, Golden Retriever, and Bassett Hound.

Symptoms include:

- Restlessness and/or pacing
- Painful, bloated abdomen
- Unproductive retching (attempting to vomit without producing material/liquid)
- Acute collapse and/or loss of consciousness

### OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS

A physical examination by a veterinarian will often yield the diagnosis, but x-rays (radiographs) are used to confirm.

Additional diagnostics such as blood pressure, ECG (electrocardiography), blood electrolytes, blood glucose (sugar), and blood lactate will help establish severity of the patient's disease.

### TREATMENT

Treatment ultimately ends with emergency surgery.

The initial goal of patient management is to increase blood pressure with intravenous (IV) fluids, address any arrhythmias, and to decompress the stomach.

Most veterinarians will introduce a large catheter through the body wall to decompress some pressure, as sedated stomach tube placement is often unreliable.

Once a patient is stable enough for anesthesia, they have immediate surgery to rotate the stomach into an appropriate position. Once replaced, the stomach is then sewn (sutured) to the body wall in a procedure called a gastropexy (or tack).

Definitive treatment involves surgery to correct the position of the stomach, remove devitalized tissue, and perform a gastropexy to prevent recurrence.

### TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- When in doubt, have the patient evaluated by a veterinarian.
- Do not try to administer Gas-X or bloating medications at home, as these are not beneficial.
  - The distension comes from swallowed air not produced gas.