



## DILATED CARDIOMYOPATHY

### ABOUT THE DISEASE

The heart is made of specialized muscle cells which contract to circulate the blood throughout the entire body. **Dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM)** is a failing ability of the heart muscles to contract which leads to gradual dilation or enlargement of the heart chambers. This disease is usually the result of genetics, most commonly found in Doberman Pinschers, Irish Wolfhounds, Boxers, and Great Danes. In rare circumstances, **DCM** can also be associated with nutritional deficiencies.

Secondary signs to **DCM** include labored breathing, coughing fits, lethargy, congestive heart failure, exercise intolerance, weakness, collapse, and/or sudden death.

Please see the [Congestive Heart Failure](#) document for additional information.

### OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS

Chest X-rays (thoracic radiographs) will show the size of the heart and any signs of congestive heart failure.

An ECG (electrocardiogram) may show an abnormal/irregular heart rhythm (arrhythmias).

An ultrasound of the heart (echocardiogram) is the preferred choice for diagnosis and assessment of severity.

Complete blood work and urine testing will provide overall health status to help determine which medications will be appropriate.

### TREATMENT

In addition to the medication outlined in the [Congestive Heart Failure](#) document, **DCM** patients may also receive:

- [Cardiac Glycoside](#) – (digoxin) helps with arrhythmias

In severe cases, patients may require hospitalization to address congestive heart failure and arrhythmias.

### TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Seek immediate consultation if the patient develops respiratory distress, collapses, or loses consciousness.
- Please reference the [Congestive Heart Failure](#) document for additional information.