



## MYASTHENIA GRAVIS

### 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** is 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.