



PANCREATITIS

ABOUT THE DISEASE

Aside from insulin production, the pancreas is responsible for excreting digestive enzymes into the intestinal tract to aid bile in digesting food.

Pancreatic inflammation, or **pancreatitis**, can either manifest abruptly (acutely) or be present long term (chronically) throughout a patient's life.

The exact cause of **pancreatitis** is sometimes unknown but will occur more frequently when patients are fed fatty foods like cheese, meat scraps, fast foods, or other greasy food items.

Mild signs might range from vomiting to loss of appetite. However, in more severe forms, life-threatening symptoms such as weakness, painful abdomen, anorexia, inflammation of the abdominal cavity (peritonitis), inflammation of the abdominal fats (steatitis), shock, and even death.

OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS

Diagnosis of **pancreatitis** is often assumed based on a history of dietary fat ingestion, but confirmed with either blood testing or abdominal ultrasound.

An abdominal ultrasound is extremely valuable for identifying severe changes in the pancreas.

Routine blood work tests the two pancreatic enzymes named amylase and lipase. These are often elevated in acute cases of **pancreatitis**, but may be normal in more chronic forms of the disease.

TREATMENT

There is no specific treatment for **pancreatitis**, but therapy is focused on maintaining patient stability and an alleviation of clinical symptoms.

Hospitalization with intravenous (IV) fluids is given to correct dehydration and balance electrolytes. Other medications are given to control abdominal pain, protect the stomach and intestines, and prevent vomiting.

Long-term management requires patients be placed on a low-fat prescription diet to help prevent a reoccurrence.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- There is no substitute for a veterinary prescription low-fat diet for the remainder of the patient's life.
 - Diet change is the most important way to prevent reoccurrence.
- As most patients with acute **pancreatitis** will transition to chronic **pancreatitis** patients, monitor for signs of lethargy, vomiting, weakness, loss of appetite, or diarrhea.
 - Recheck as soon as symptoms develop to minimize suffering and expense.