



GASTRIC DILATION & VOLVULUS

ABOUT THE DISEASE

Gastric dilatation and volvulus (GDV) (commonly known as a “flipped stomach”) occurs when the stomach begins to twist on its axis, which causes swallowed air to become trapped in the stomach.

As the stomach fills with air, circulation to the stomach, spleen and heart become compromised. Patients commonly exhibit signs of unproductive retching and in as little as 4-6 hours, patients may suffer abnormal/irregular heart rhythms (arrhythmias), life-threatening shock, and even death.

Most listed causes of GDV are speculative and untrue, but most consistent data suggest large breed, deep-chested canine patients are usually affected by this condition, with a first-tier relative who has also been afflicted by the condition.

Commonly affected breeds are the Great Dane, Saint Bernard, Boxer, Doberman Pinscher, Standard Poodle, German Shepherd, Labrador Retriever, Golden Retriever, and Bassett Hound.

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 is ultimately emergency surgery to decompress and de-rotate the patients stomach back to a normal position.

The initial goal of patient management is to stabilize patients for surgery. Treatments are initiated to increase blood pressure with intravenous (IV) fluids, address any arrhythmias, and decompress the stomach.

Once a patient is stable enough for anesthesia, the stomach is replaced to a normal position and sutured (sewn) to the body wall in a procedure called a gastropexy (or tack). While no method of prevention is guaranteed, the gastropexy substantially reduces recurrence in the future.

Additionally, should the spleen become heavily traumatized during the flip and blood flow restrictions, it may require removal.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- When in doubt, have the patient evaluated by a veterinarian when exhibiting non-productive retching
- Do not try to administer Gas-X or bloating medications at home, as these are not beneficial because the dilation is from swallowed air, not produced gas