



## DIABETES MELLITUS

### ABOUT THE DISEASE

DM happens when the pancreas doesn't make enough insulin. This causes high blood sugar, which can spill into urine.

#### Common signs:

- More thirst and peeing
- Weight loss despite big appetite
- **Dog-specific:** Blindness from cataracts.
- **Cat-specific:** Dull coat, yellow tint to skin/gums/eyes (jaundice), weak hind legs ("dropped hocks").
- **Extra risks:** Bladder/kidney infections (sugar feeds bacteria); higher chance of infections anywhere.

In veterinary medicine, DM is often simplified into:

- Non-Insulin-Dependent – Body ignores insulin. Treat with special diet + fix underlying issues.
- Insulin-Dependent – Pancreas makes too little insulin. Needs shots + diet.
  - *Affects nearly all dogs; 50-70% cats.*

Please see the document for Diabetic Ketoacidosis (DKA), which contains information on a more advanced form of DM.

### OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS

Routine blood and urine testing is typically preliminary testing in most cases.

For trickier early or subtle cases, a special test called fructosamine helps confirm it. Once on insulin, fructosamine also tracks how well DM is managed long-term. Most pets get it checked twice a year—or more often if keeping sugars stable is tough.

### TREATMENT

**Insulin Injections:** Required forever in all dogs, most cats. Typically given 2x/day, every day, administered at home.

**Glucose curve:** Helps veterinarians track blood sugar throughout the day, to narrow in effective dosing.

**Diet + weight:** Prescription food stabilizes sugar, helps lose weight, keeps appetite healthy.

**Watch for low sugar (hypoglycemia) after insulin changes:** Signs like confusion, weakness, seizures, coma, death. Don't hesitate with early symptoms, get to a veterinarian right away for assessment.

### TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- There is no substitute for a veterinary prescription diabetic diet and a weight management program.
- Only administer insulin AFTER a patient eats their meal. **Do not administer insulin if patients are not eating.**
- DM is a treatable condition, but requires commitment in time, money, and attention.
  - Serious and life-threatening complications can arise if left untreated or not regulated appropriately.
- Offer food, sugar-containing substances, or syrup if signs of hypoglycemia are noted.
- Follow recommended recheck and testing protocols recommended by a veterinarian to help regulate blood sugar.
  - Contact a veterinarian immediately if you observe any symptom of illness outside of regular rechecks.