

PANCREATITIS

Pancreatitis is an inflammation of the pancreas, an abdominal organ needed for the digestion of food. It is attached to the first part of the intestine below the stomach.

Functions of the pancreas include controlling the blood sugar level as well as producing chemicals needed to help break down food into products the body can use.

The healthy pancreas produces potent “enzymes” to help in the digestion of food--**BUT** when pancreatitis occurs, these same enzymes can begin to destroy the pancreas itself. This causes severe abdominal pain and discomfort.

In mild cases, the pet recovers in a few days with proper treatment. In **SEVERE** cases, the tissue of the pancreas is damaged badly allowing the digestive juices present to leak out into the abdomen irritating other abdominal organs. This causes great pain and inflammation. Bacterial infection often begins creation of more problems.

Acute shock and even death can result from damage done by Acute Pancreatitis.

Animals that develop pancreatitis usually have a history of being over-weight, exposed to garbage, or fed fatty foods.

Signs may include loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhea, restlessness, acute intense abdominal pain, and possibly abdominal distention.

Diagnosis is made by history, clinical signs seen on physical examination, radiographs, and laboratory blood tests.

In order for the pancreas to heal, it must be completely “**rested**” to allow time to recuperate. Your pet may be hospitalized so that no food, water, or medications need be given orally until the acute signs subside. Anything given by mouth can stimulate the pancreas to produce more destructive enzymes, which, of course, we want to prevent. During this time of hospitalization all nutrition, fluids, and drugs will be given by injection which allows the pancreas to rest.

Recurrence is common. It is very IMPORTANT that you prevent access to foods that might lead to another attack. Low-fat diets are often required for the rest of the pet’s life to avoid problems. Diet control is the key to avoiding future attacks.

Severe scarring of the pancreas can lead to other problems such as liver diseases, diabetes, and inability to properly digest food. If enough of the pancreas has been destroyed, daily food supplementation with digestive aids may be needed to insure the pet can digest food sufficiently to maintain a healthy body.

Early diagnosis and treatment followed by conscientious home care will give your pet the best chance of recovery.