

Parvo Virus in Dogs

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What is Parvo?

Parvo is a virus that can cause severe disease in dogs and can be life-threatening to the unvaccinated dog.

Once an unvaccinated dog is infected, the virus will live in the dog's intestines and cause vomiting, diarrhea, dehydration, and possibly death if left untreated or treated too late in the course of infection.

What symptoms should I look for?



- Vomiting Watery, Foamy, Milky or Slimy
- Diarrhea Often bloody, Foul-smelling
- Appetite Loss
- Listless or Depressed Attitude
- Often have dull, glassy-eyed stare

How do Dogs get Infected?

Parvo is highly contagious between dogs. Dogs can get it from coming into contact with infected or recently infected dogs who are still shedding it in their stool. They can also get it by sniffing around locations where an infected dog was previously if the area hasn't been properly cleaned and disinfected with bleach. It can even be transferred from location to location on people's shoes, clothes, and unwashed hands. Parvo can be anywhere in the environment and once present, can live for a very long time, even after the infected dog is long gone.



Can it be Treated?

Treatment ideally involves hospitalizing the infected dog on intravenous (IV) fluids to help with hydration and giving them supportive care, such as antibiotics and nausea medicine, while their body fights off the infection. Some dogs can survive on care in the home, as long as they are given the proper antibiotics and nausea medicine, along with supplemental hydration. However, many dogs do die of either dehydration or bacterial infection in the bloodstream from parvo virus wreaking havoc in their intestines.

It can take 1-2 weeks for a dog to fully recover from parvo virus. Once a dog has recovered from being sick, it is no longer considered infectious, and it should be protected against future disease.

Once on the mend, the dog should be given a thorough bath and the area where the dog was staying should be thoroughly cleaned and bleached. **This is because parvo can live in the environment for a long time and only bleach will help to kill it from the environment.**



Prevention is Key

As long as other dogs, especially puppies, are properly vaccinated against parvo, they either shouldn't develop sickness if they are exposed to it, or if they do get sick, it is self-limiting, and their body should be able to fight it off.

The vaccine for parvo is very effective and should be given to every puppy once they are around 6 weeks of age. They then need the vaccine booster every 4 weeks until they are at least 12 weeks of age, and then they will need it again once they are one year of age. Until they get all of their parvo vaccine boosters, they should be kept away from other puppies or dogs with unknown vaccine histories – example – avoid pet stores, dog parks, and especially floors at vet clinics. Adult dogs should have their parvo vaccine booster every 3 years. **We also recommend getting vaccines from a registered veterinarian or veterinarian office and not do it yourself ones.**

