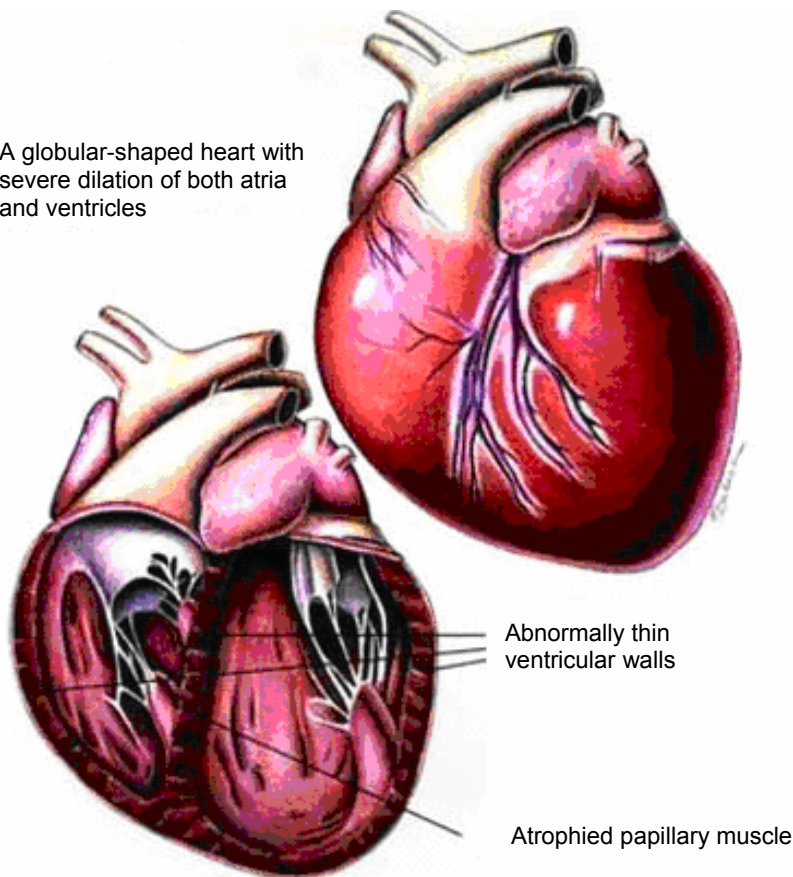




Canine Dilated Cardiomyopathy

A globular-shaped heart with severe dilation of both atria and ventricles



Canine Dilated Cardiomyopathy

Diagnostic Plan

History
Physical examination
Urinalysis
Blood work
Chest x-rays
Electrocardiography
Echocardiography
X-rays of the heart after dye injection

Therapeutic Plan

Enforced rest
Removal of fluid from the chest and abdomen
Diuretics
Drugs that strengthen the heart
Drugs that dilate blood vessels
Bronchodilation
Oxygen therapy

Nutritional Plan

A food that avoids excess levels of sodium

Canine Dilated Cardiomyopathy

Your dog has dilated cardiomyopathy. Cardiomyopathy is a disease of the heart muscle characterized by congestive heart failure and abnormal cardiac rhythms. Common clinical signs include difficult breathing, coughing, exercise intolerance, and an enlarged abdomen. It is treated with rest, medications to improve cardiac function and control arrhythmias, diuretics, and low-sodium foods. This client education sheet will help you learn more about this condition and will review your veterinarian's instructions for your pet's care at home, as well as follow-up with the veterinary health care team.

What You Should Know About Canine Dilated Cardiomyopathy

The heart has four chambers: two atria, which are located on the top of the heart, and two ventricles, which are located on the bottom. Dilated cardiomyopathy is a disease characterized by enlargement of all four heart chambers. In dilated cardiomyopathy, the walls of the ventricles are abnormally thin, and the heart has severely reduced ability to contract. Disturbances in the normal rhythm of the heart are common. Dogs with dilated cardiomyopathy usually have congestive heart failure with fluid accumulation in the lungs, abdomen, or both. Dilated cardiomyopathies occur most often in large and giant breeds and in Cocker Spaniels.

Causes

The cause of dilated cardiomyopathy is unknown, but the condition may result from injury to the heart muscle caused by infectious agents, poisons, drugs, and chemicals.

Diagnosis

During physical examination, your veterinarian may hear heart murmurs and muffled heart sounds, feel abnormal fluid accumulation in the abdomen, feel an enlarged liver, and discover signs of impaired circulation. X-rays of the chest and abdomen are useful for diagnosing heart enlargement and fluid accumulations. EKGs usually show conduction disturbances and arrhythmias. Ultrasound of the heart helps confirm the diagnosis. Urinalyses and blood tests are commonly performed to assess the effects of heart failure on other organs.

Treatment and Home Care

Emergency treatment may be necessary to stabilize some dogs with dilated cardiomyopathy. Drugs to dilate blood vessels, manage arrhythmias, and strengthen the heart; diuretics; oxygen; rest; and removal of fluid from the chest and abdomen are used by your veterinarian during this phase of treatment.

Maintenance therapy is geared toward reducing the heart rate, treating abnormal rhythms, and treating congestive heart failure. Therefore, your veterinarian may prescribe several medications for you to give at home. Included are drugs that dilate blood vessels, manage arrhythmias, and remove excess fluid from the body, and those that strengthen and slow the heart. Your veterinarian may also ask you to restrict your pet's exercise to reduce the workload on the heart.

Home care consists of giving all prescribed medications, monitoring your dog for the resolution of clinical signs, and following your veterinarian's instructions for proper diet and exercise restriction. Some drugs that your veterinarian uses to treat heart disease have side effects. Report any abnormal behavior, such as weakness, vomiting, and diarrhea, to your veterinarian at once. You will need to return to the hospital for diagnostic tests that your veterinarian will use to check the effectiveness of therapy.

Nutritional Plan

If your dog has dilated cardiomyopathy, your veterinarian may suggest a dietary change based on your pet's age and body condition, clinical signs, and the presence or absence of disease in other organs and body systems. Many patients with congestive heart failure benefit from foods low in sodium. These foods reduce the workload of the heart by reducing fluid accumulation in the body. Foods with moderate sodium restriction are useful for managing early heart failure. Such foods include Hill's® Prescription Diet® Canine g/d®. If clinical signs of congestive heart failure persist or develop when your pet is fed a food with moderate sodium restriction, your veterinarian may recommend a very low-sodium food to reduce fluid retention. Such foods include Hill's® Prescription Diet® Canine h/d® and k/d®.

Transitioning Food

Unless recommended otherwise by your veterinarian, gradually introduce any new food over a seven-day period. Mix the new food with your pet's former food, gradually increasing its proportion until only the new food is fed.

If your pet is one of the few that doesn't readily accept a new food, try warming the canned food to body temperature, hand feeding for the first few days, or mixing the dry food with warm water (wait ten minutes before serving). Feed only the recommended food. Do not feed additional salt or any snacks that may contain sodium. Be patient but firm with your pet. This is important because the success or failure of treatment depends to a large degree on strict adherence to the new food.

Presented as an educational service by



Home Care Instructions

Client's Name: _____

Patient's Name: _____

Medication(s): _____

Nutritional Recommendation: _____

Follow-Up Appointment: _____

(Hospital Stamp Area Above)

REGULAR VISITS WILL HELP OUR VETERINARY HEALTH CARE TEAM PROVIDE FOR YOUR PET'S BEST INTEREST.