

diarrhea?

Do you know what to do if your dog
develops diarrhea?
by Deb Dempsey

This article was published in the Spring 2008 issue of [The Colorado Dog Magazine](#). The author co-owns [Mouthfuls Pet Boutique](#).

Here is the list we rundown at our store when presented with this problem:

1. How long has this been going on?

Dogs with watery diarrhea can dehydrate quickly. It's best to discontinue food and provide plenty of fresh water of chicken broth for up to 24 hours. This allows the dog's digestive system time to rest and recover. (Do not withhold food from pregnant dogs or puppies.) When you begin to reintroduce food, Dr. Aubrey from the [Center for Animal Wellness](#) in Denver suggests white rice, moistened with low-sodium chicken broth and pumpkin. Protein can be slowly introduced once stools are consistently firm. Doc Gurney from [Aspen Park Vet Hospital](#) in Conifer prefers uncooked oatmeal instead of rice along with pumpkin pie filling. He also suggest feeding a tablespoon of honey every hour.

2. Have you had a stool sample analyzed at your vet's office?

If the loose stools continue, take a stool sample to your vet to have it analyzed for parasites and enzyme activity. Dr. Aubrey reports that he runs quick tests for Giardia and can have the results back within 15 minutes. Doc Gurney frequently finds Giardia and Cryptosporidiosis showing up in his practice and also uses this quick-result test that runs between \$35 and \$55. The same test also checks for adequate enzyme fecal activity and if it comes back low, high dosages of digestive enzymes are often in order.

3. Did you just switch food?

Dogs with sensitive stomachs often have trouble switching foods, especially when you move from a traditional food to one that is grain-free or higher in quality than what you previously used. When possible, it's best to make a slow transition over at least a three-day period. If your dog is still struggling with the change, the addition of pumpkin pie filling will firm up the stools rather quickly. The dietary fiber in the pumpkin will absorb water, the cinnamon helps alleviate diarrhea and the sugar aids in the absorption of water. Doc Gurney also points out that diarrhea can occur when a dog is overfed as well.

4. If this is a chronic problem, what type of food have you been feeding?

There isn't a food out there that's going to be perfect for every dog. Your dog may have developed a food sensitivity or allergy to a particular ingredient. Try switching the proteins (such as from chicken to beef) and limit any processed grains and other unnecessary fillers. According to Doc Gurney dogs most often develop sensitivities to fowl (chicken), pork, milk and wheat.

5. Have you ever tried adding digestive enzymes and/or probiotics to your dogs' diet, especially if your dog has been on antibiotics or steroids?

We have had amazing success in our store with a digestive enzyme by the name of Prozyme. Every holistic vet we've talked to recommends adding additional enzymes to a pet's diet. In the case of chronic diarrhea, this is especially important. Prozyme aids the dog's system by breaking down its food for better absorption. (This will also have the added benefit of reducing gas.) In addition to the enzymes, we also recommend adding probiotics in the form of yogurt or kefir. These "good bugs" will reduce the bad bugs in your dog's digestive track and help regulate his system. Doc Gurney is a fan of liquid probiotics that can be found in the refrigerated section of your local health-food store.

Dr. Aubrey suggest not waiting more than 24 hours before seeking a vet's advice. He says if blood is present in the stool or the dog is vomiting, consider that to be an emergency situation.