

Care of Your Diabetic Pet

Diabetes is a chronic endocrine disorder that occurs in dogs and cats. It is characterized by high blood sugar and results when the pancreas is unable to produce enough insulin to meet the animal's requirements.

Treatment

Treatment requires a commitment of time and management from you, the owner. There is no cure for diabetes, but, as with humans, it can be controlled with insulin injections, diet, and exercise management. Once your pet has been diagnosed with diabetes, his or her specific insulin requirements need to be determined. This is accomplished by giving the pet an insulin injection at home and testing the blood sugar levels at regular intervals by the veterinarian. These results are used to determine your pet's initial insulin requirements. Once control is achieved, frequency of further evaluations will be determined by the doctor.

Handling Insulin and Syringes

Insulin must be kept **refrigerated** at all times and the bottle should be rolled gently in your hand prior to withdrawal of the insulin into the syringe. The syringe and needle should be stored in protective wrappers to keep them sterile. These syringes and needles are single use only. Make sure the syringes you use are the exact same type that the doctor prescribed.

Drawing up the Insulin

Set out the syringe and needle, insulin bottle and have the pet ready. Then:

1. Remove the needle guard from the needle; draw back the plunger to the desired dose level.
2. Insert the needle into the insulin bottle through the center of the rubber stopper.
3. Inject the air in the syringe into the bottle to prevent a vacuum from forming in the insulin bottle.
4. Withdraw the plunger filling the syringe with more insulin than needed, then inject insulin back into the bottle until the correct amount is reached. Make sure there are no bubbles in the syringe.
5. Now, check to see you have the correct amount of insulin in the syringe.

How to Give an Injection

1. Hold the syringe in your dominant hand.
2. Have a friend or member of your family hold your pet as you pick a fold of skin along the pet's back with your free hand (pick a different spot each day).
3. Push the needle through the pet's skin quickly. Take care to push the needle through one fold of skin, not into your finger, the pet's underlying muscle, or out the other side.
4. Now put your thumb on the plunger, push the plunger further into the syringe.
5. Withdraw the needle from the pet's skin, and immediately cover the needle with the needle guard.
6. Praise your pet or give a treat, a reward creates a cooperative pet that may not even need to be held.

When and What to Feed

When you feed your diabetic pet is as important as what you feed it. If your pet is sometimes reluctant to eat or if his or her appetite is inconsistent, be certain that he/she consumes a meal before you give the insulin injection. As a general rule, the diabetic animal should be fed more than once a day to help maintain blood sugar at a constant level.

Diabetic cats and dogs need a high protein/meat diet with low carbohydrates. We have samples for these diets.

Things to Watch for at Home

A blood sugar level significantly below normal is an immediate threat to life and needs to be dealt with as an emergency situation. Symptoms of too much insulin usually occurs 2-6 hours after the morning injection. The earliest signs resemble a drunken state: that is, your pet will be weak and walk wobbly, uncoordinated gait. This state may progress to seizure or coma. Should this occur, give 1-2 teaspoons of Karo syrup orally, molasses or honey. Contact our veterinarian immediately if no improvement is seen in 15 minutes.

If your pet is drinking more water and urinating more than normal, this may be an indication that the blood sugar is too high. Make an appointment to have the blood sugar level checked.



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