

# ORAH Info:

## My dog has diabetes mellitus-- Now What?



Diabetes mellitus is a disease which causes increased sugar (known as glucose) in a dog's bloodstream. Insulin is required for a body's cells to use glucose, which is derived from digestion of food, and diabetic dogs need insulin supplementation in order to achieve this balance and stay healthy. Without insulin, the glucose stays in the bloodstream and the body must find energy by breaking down other fats and tissues. This causes the dog to lose weight even though he is very hungry.

### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF DIABETES

The hallmark symptoms of diabetes are: increased thirst and increased urination, weight loss in spite of increased appetite, and listlessness. There are various other neurologic and eye disorders that can result from untreated diabetes.

### WHICH DOGS CAN GET DIABETES?

Any dog can develop diabetes, but overweight, older dogs are more likely to develop this disease as are dogs with a history of pancreatitis or other endocrine diseases. Symptoms may worsen when pets go through periods of stress.

### WHY DO SOME DOGS GET SO SICK?

Most pets can handle high blood sugar for some time. However, using fats as an alternative fuel source can lead to severe changes in the pH of the blood as ketones are formed. A dog with diabetic ketoacidosis requires intensive care and hospitalization to survive through this crisis.

### HOW IS DIABETES TREATED?

In most cases, diabetes is treated by administering insulin injections twice daily and feeding a specific diet. Dogs who also have low thyroid levels or another endocrine disease often need additional treatments in order to achieve an acceptable level of diabetic regulation. Dogs do not require the intensive hour-to-hour glucose control that is typical in human medicine, and their response to therapy is usually very rewarding.

### TREATMENT BASICS

Only give the insulin injection if your dog eats. Giving insulin to a dog who is not eating can cause the blood glucose to go too low, which is more worrisome than it staying too high for a short period of time. For this same reason, if you make a mistake during the injection or are unsure if you or someone else in the household already gave the insulin, do not give a second dose.

Insulin must be kept refrigerated. Before drawing up the insulin dose, gently rock the insulin bottle to re-suspend the insulin crystals in the solution. Do not shake the insulin as this breaks the crystals and decreases the potency of the insulin.

Signs of low blood glucose include: weakness, pacing and staring, seeming dazed or confused, seizures, and extreme lethargy. If any of these occur, give your pet a few tablespoons of Karo syrup to bring the blood glucose up quickly. If he is alert enough, feed a small meal. Consult with a veterinarian before giving the next dose of insulin. If your dog is not rapidly improving, seek emergency care.

Recheck blood glucose levels regularly with the veterinarian. Diabetics' needs can change over time, requiring adjustment of the insulin dosage. Once your dog is regulated well, re-evaluations are needed much less often.

There can be helpful information on the internet about managing a diabetic dog. There are also some sites that have anecdotal or inaccurate information. The best sites are listed on our website [onionriveranimalhospital.com](http://onionriveranimalhospital.com)