

# Why Does My Puppy Have Diarrhea?

You have a new puppy and the first week is going great—your pup has been introduced to her new family, is eating well, sleeping through the night (mostly) and progressing well with house training. One morning when you take your puppy out, you notice she has diarrhea. What should you do?

## How Did My Puppy Get Diarrhea?

Diarrhea is actually quite common in puppies and can vary from one or two mild episodes that resolve quickly to severe gastrointestinal symptoms that may indicate a more serious illness. There are a few reasons why a puppy experiences diarrhea:

- ***They're Stressed Out!*** Adoption into a new home is exciting for puppies but can also be stressful because of all the associated changes. So it's not unusual for puppies to react with a mild gastrointestinal (GI) tract upset and develop diarrhea. To de-stress your pup, let her acclimate to her new surroundings slowly. Limit the number of visitors she meets during the first weeks to avoid overwhelming her. Provide her with plenty of quiet time and naps, and set up a daily routine of regularly spaced feeding, play, rest and exercise.
- ***They're On a New Diet:*** Remember, depending on your puppy's age, she may have just finished weaning, which is a significant diet change. If you've changed kibble, it can cause temporary GI upset, especially if the change was introduced rapidly. If you're going to transition your puppy's food, be sure to transition it slowly over a period of seven to ten days, increasing the proportion of new food during that time.
- ***They're trying EVERYTHING.*** All puppies are curious and tend to explore new items by putting them into their mouths and sometimes ingesting them. Garbage, toys, house plants, insects and even dirt can all be eaten by an unattended puppy and can lead to stomach upset or, more seriously, an intestinal blockage.
- ***They Were Exposed to Parasites.*** Parasite exposure can come from dietary indiscretion or transmission from the mother. If you suspect your puppy has a parasite, take her to the vet right away. Parasitic infestations must be treated with veterinary prescribed medications.
- ***They Caught a Bug.*** Diarrhea is one of the most common signs of several infectious diseases in puppies. The most serious of these is parvovirus, a highly contagious disease that can be life-threatening. In addition to developing severe diarrhea, puppies infected with parvovirus will be lethargic, have a fever and show signs of abdominal pain and discomfort. Puppies are particularly susceptible to parvovirus, so be sure to get her vaccinated when it's time.

## Preventing Diarrhea in Puppies

Reducing stress and introducing new food slowly are great ways to prevent puppy diarrhea, but they are not the only tools in your toolbox. Make sure you're supervising your puppy at all times. Keeping a watchful eye on your new pup will keep her from ingesting dangerous items and generally staying out of trouble.

Because there are a variety of causes of diarrhea in puppies, it is important to check with your vet whenever you see that she has diarrhea. Partnering with your vet to get a proactive health plan in place will keep your pup on the straight and narrow. Within a few days of bringing your puppy home, take her to your veterinarian for a complete physical examination. Your veterinarian will assess the puppy's overall health and condition, check for the presence of parasites and answer any questions that you may have about feeding and health care.