

So Your Dog Has Cushing's Disease . . .

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Hyperadrenocorticism (also known as *Cushing's disease*) is a condition in which the adrenal gland produces too much steroid hormone (cortisol). Common signs of Cushing's disease include:

- ▶ increased drinking and urination
- ▶ ravenous appetite
- ▶ excessive panting
- ▶ distended abdomen (pot-bellied appearance)
- ▶ hair loss

Your veterinarian will discuss with you what a diagnosis of Cushing's disease means for your dog:

- ▶ Treatment options include surgery or medical management. Your veterinarian will discuss what option may be best for your dog.
- ▶ Many veterinarians choose either trilostane or mitotane as the medication.
- ▶ Medications will not cure the disease; rather they are aimed at controlling symptoms.
- ▶ Complications of uncontrolled Cushing's disease include elevated blood pressure, chronic urinary tract infections, skin lesions, and/or diabetes mellitus.
- ▶ Close control is required to avoid disease complications.
- ▶ Side effects that are usually mild may occur from medications. These might include vomiting, diarrhea, decreased appetite, and reduced energy level.
- ▶ If side effects are severe or persistent, they may indicate a more severe adverse event (see right*).
- ▶ Cushing's disease can take several weeks to months to control.
- ▶ If your dog is treated with medication, regular physical examinations and lab work such as cortisol checks will be needed to monitor the dose.
- ▶ Many dogs respond well to treatment and, over time, owners will see improvement in their dog's overall well-being.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

- ▶ Be open and honest with your veterinary team about what you expect to accomplish.
- ▶ Communicate your ideal time line and budget with your veterinarian.
- ▶ Watch for any side effects of medications and report them promptly to your veterinarian.
- ▶ Follow administration instructions closely, including giving medication with food.
- ▶ Give medications consistently and bring your dog in for scheduled rechecks.

* An important complication to watch for is an Addisonian crisis, which is life-threatening and reflects a dramatic decrease in cortisol levels. If your pet experiences **vomiting, diarrhea, anorexia, lethargy, generalized weakness, or muscle tremors after treatment is started**, contact a member of the team immediately.