

# Bloat (Gastric dilatation), Gastric torsion (Gastric volvulus) Bloat with torsion (Gastric dilatation and volvulus, or GDV)

## What is it?

Bloat occurs when the stomach fills with gas and expands, putting pressure on the surrounding organs and blood supply to the hindquarters and back legs. Blood then pools in those areas, unable to return to the heart, and the dog goes into shock. Gastric Torsion is when the stomach becomes so full of gas that it flips over. A dog has to be bloating already for torsion to occur, but not all bloat cases will lead to torsion. Torsion significantly raises the risk of death from a bloat episode.



## What causes it?

The exact cause of bloat is unknown at this time. It has been observed more often in dogs with a close relative who have also bloated, and existing research supports the theory of a genetic component. Eating a large meal in one sitting and wolfing down food significantly increase bloat risk. It is believed that both genetics and environmental factors contribute to the likelihood of a dog bloating. Bloat is most frequently seen in deep-chested breeds such as the Newfoundland, Great Dane, and St. Bernard.

## Signs & Symptoms

Symptoms of bloat include restlessness, pacing, agitation, whining, retching, and an enlarged abdomen. The dog may have difficulty breathing due to pressure on the diaphragm. The dog may turn to look at its abdomen. As the bloat progresses, the dog may retch up foam. Drooling is also a symptom in breeds who don't normally drool.

## Prognosis:

*Bloat is a medical emergency. If you suspect your dog is bloating, go to the closest vet or emergency vet without delay. If possible, call the vet from the car and tell them you are bringing in a dog with suspected bloat. Every minute counts.*

## Prevention:

You can prevent torsion through a surgical procedure called a gastropexy. This is a procedure in which the dog's stomach is "tacked" to the abdominal wall. Owners may opt to have the procedure done along with spay/neuter surgery, as a stand-alone surgery, or if the dog requires surgery following a bloat to prevent future episodes.

## Testing & Treatment

### How is it diagnosed?

Abdominal x-rays confirm diagnosis. Additional blood work, including complete blood count (CBC), serum chemistry, blood electrolytes, and tests to assess function of heart and lung, and a urinalysis may be ordered.

### How is it treated?

Treatment begins with stabilization. Supportive IV fluids and oxygen may be given. The vet will determine if they are able to release the gas using a special tube threaded into the mouth and to the stomach, but this is not always possible. If unable, the gas must be released with a procedure called percutaneous trocarization. An area on the dog's abdomen is shaved and prepped as for surgery, and a large needle is passed through the abdominal wall and into the stomach, releasing the gas.

Not all cases of bloat require surgical interventions, but surgery may be needed if lack of blood supply has caused tissue death. All cases of bloat with torsion require surgery to re-position the flipped stomach.

Heart arrhythmias can be an issue post-bloat, and your vet may want to keep your dog to be monitored. Most heart arrhythmias occur within 36 hours of a bloat episode.

*This information is not meant to be a substitute for veterinary care. Always follow the instructions provided by your veterinarian.*

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