

## Signs of canine illness

### How to tell if your dog is sick

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Owners who observe and handle their healthy dogs have a head start on recognizing early signs of illness in their pets. Those who know what a healthy pet acts, feels, and smells like can spot differences in behavior and bodies and determine whether a trip to the veterinarian is necessary.

Healthy dogs have a temperature of 101-102° F, a respiratory rate of 15-20 breaths per minute, and a heart rate of 80-120 beats per minute. They have pink mucous membranes (gums, inside of lips, tongue, inside of eyelids) and rapid capillary refill action in these areas. They have clean-smelling ears and skin and a full haircoat. Their skin is pliant, an indication of proper hydration, and their eyes are clear and bright.

If your puppy or dog shows any of the following signs, be prepared to call your veterinarian.

- **Eyes: swelling, discharge, redness, etc.**
- **Nose: running, crusting, discharge, etc.**
- **Ears: discharge, debris, odor, twitching, scratching, shaking, etc.**
- **Coughing, gagging, sneezing, retching, or vomiting.**
- **Irregular breathing, shortness of breath, prolonged or heavy panting, etc.**
- **Intestinal activity**
  - Color and consistency of bowel movement
  - Frequency of defecation
  - Bloody stool
  - Evidence of parasites, etc
- **Change in amount of food intake**
- **Change in body weight**
- **Change in water intake**
- **Urine**
  - Color
  - Frequency

- Amount
- Straining
- Dribbling, etc.
- **Odor**
  - Mouth?
  - Skin?
  - Ears?
  - Other?
- **Coat & skin**
  - Wounds
  - Tumors
  - Hair loss
  - Dander
  - Color change
  - Biting
  - Scratching
  - Bite marks
  - Evidence of parasites
  - Licking, etc.
- **Behavior**
  - Depression
  - Anxiety,
  - Fatigue
  - Lethargy
  - Sleepiness
  - Trembling
  - Stumbling
  - Falling, etc.

Noticing signs is half the battle; keeping a record helps the veterinarian make a diagnosis. Be sure to note when the symptom first appeared, and whether it has been intermittent, continuous, increasing in frequency, getting better, or getting worse before calling the veterinarian.