

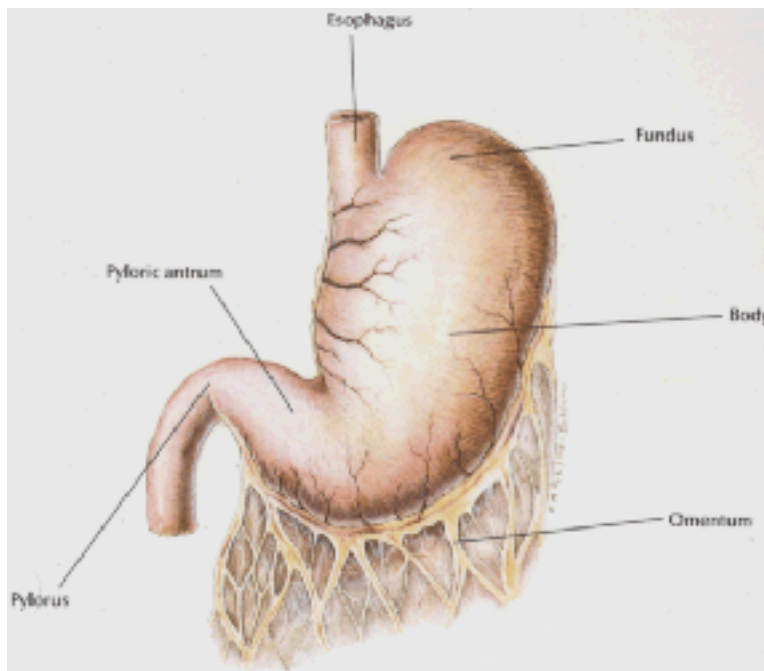


**Memorial Beach
Veterinary Hospital**
15 Healdsburg Avenue
Healdsburg, Ca. 95448
707 433-6916
memorialbeachvet.com

Bloat - The Mother of All Emergencies & Prophylactic Gastropexy

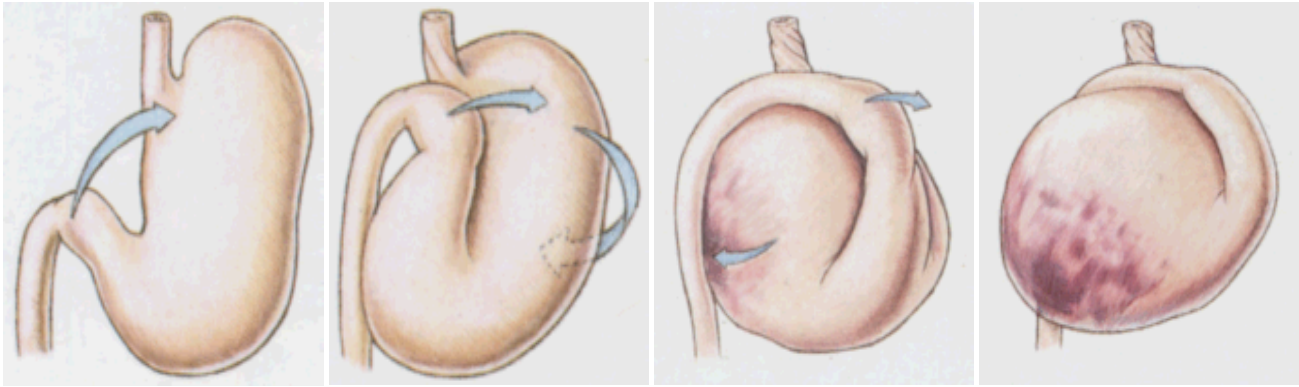
There are many injuries and physical disorders that represent life-threatening emergencies. There is only one condition so drastic that it overshadows them all in terms of rapidity of consequences and effort in emergency treatment. This is the gastric dilatation and volvulus – the bloat.

What is it and Why is it so Serious?



Normal Stomach

The normal stomach sits high in the abdomen and contains a small amount of gas, some mucus, and any food being digested. It undergoes a normal rhythm of contraction, receiving food from the esophagus above, grinding the food, and meting the ground food out to the small intestine at its other end. Normally this proceeds uneventfully except for the occasional burp.



In the bloated stomach, gas and/or food stretches the stomach many times its normal size, causing tremendous abdominal pain. For reasons we do not fully understand, this grossly distended stomach has a tendency to rotate, thus twisting off not only its own blood supply but also the only exit routes for the gas inside. Not only is this condition extremely painful but it is also rapidly life threatening. A dog with a bloated, twisted stomach (more scientifically called gastric dilatation and volvulus) will die in pain in a matter of hours unless drastic steps are taken.

What are the Risk Factors for Developing Bloat? Classically, this condition affects dog breeds that are said to be deep-chested, meaning the length of their chest from backbone to sternum is relatively long while the chest width from right to left is narrow. Examples of deep-chested breeds would be the Great Dane, Greyhound, and the setter breeds. Still, any dog can bloat, even dachshunds and Chihuahuas. ***Dogs weighing more than 99 pounds have an approximate 20% risk of bloat.*** Classically, the dog had eaten a large meal and exercised heavily shortly thereafter. Still, we usually do not know why a given dog bloats on an individual basis. No specific diet or dietary ingredient has been proven to be associated with bloat. Some factors that may increase and decrease the risk of bloat are listed below.

Factors Increasing the Risk of Bloat

- Feeding only one meal a day
- Having closely related family members with a history of bloat
- Eating rapidly
- Being thin or underweight
- Restricting water before and after meals
- Feeding a dry diet with animal fat listed in the first four ingredients
- Fearful or anxious temperament
- History of aggression towards people or other dogs
- Male dogs are more likely to bloat than females
- Older dogs (7 - 12 years) were the highest risk group

Factors Decreasing the Risk of Bloat

- Inclusion of canned dog food in the diet
- Happy or easy-going temperament
- Feeding a dry food containing a calcium-rich meat meal (such as meat/lamb meal, fish meal, chicken by-product meal, meat meal, or bone meal) listed in the first four

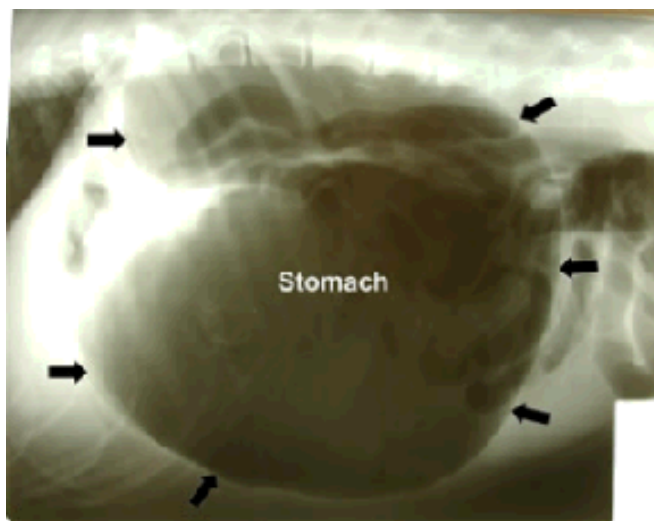
- ingredients of the ingredient list.
- Eating two or more meals per day

Contrary to popular belief, cereal ingredients such as soy, wheat or corn in the first four ingredients of the ingredient list does not increase the risk of bloat.

Prophylactic Gastropexy

A study by Ward, Patonek, and Glickman reviewed the benefit of a **prophylactic surgery** for bloat. The prophylactic surgery amounts to performing a **gastropexy surgery** in a healthy dog. ***Prophylactic gastropexy was found to make sense for at-risk breeds. Gastropexy fixes the stomach to the body wall to prevent the stomach from twisting in the event of bloat. This can often make the difference between life and death should bloat occur.*** This is often done in conjunction with a spay or neuter but can be done at any time under general anesthesia.

How to tell if your Dog has Bloat



Radiograph showing typical gas distension of the stomach in a case of bloat

Your dog may have an obviously distended stomach especially near the ribs. This may or may not be always evident depending on the dog's body conformation. Other symptoms include:

- Drooling of saliva
- Anxious and pacing. Unable to get comfortable
- Retching and attempting to vomit. Sometimes bringing up foamy saliva.
- Severe depression or shock

The biggest clue is the vomiting or retching: the pet appears highly nauseated and is retching but little is coming up. ***If you see these symptoms, rush your dog to the veterinarian IMMEDIATELY.*** Time is of the essence for a successful resolution. Your dog will be treated to relieve the gas in the stomach, treat for shock and pain. Surgery may be needed to replace the stomach and evaluate for internal damage.

It is crucially important that owners of big dogs be aware of this

condition and be prepared for it. Know where to take your dog during overnight or Sunday hours for emergency care. Avoid exercising your dog after a large meal. Know what to watch for. Enjoy the special friendship a large dog provides but at the same time be aware of the large dog's special needs and concerns. Consider a prophylactic gastropexy to reduce the likelihood of life-threatening damage should bloat occur.