

How to Tell If Your Dog Is Sick

- Any change in your dog's normal behavior, such as increased lethargy, loss of appetite, or weight loss, may indicate that your dog is ill.
- If you suspect that your dog is sick, contact your veterinarian for advice.
- If your dog becomes ill after your veterinarian's normal business hours, call an emergency veterinary clinic for guidance.
- Some illnesses require immediate veterinary attention, so when in doubt, call a veterinary professional.

How Can I Tell If My Dog Is Ill?

Despite the adage about a dog's nose being warm, cold, wet, or dry, any of those signs may, in fact, be normal. Many other signs can give you a better indication of illness in a dog. For example, any changes such as decreases in energy level (e.g., sleeping more), decreased appetite, or weight gain/loss may signal that your dog is not feeling well. Other signs to look for include:

- Vomiting
- Diarrhea or bloody stools
- Constipation
- Coughing or sneezing
- Excessive panting or difficulty breathing
- Limping
- Exercise intolerance
- Fainting episodes
- Increased drinking and/or urination
- Bloody urine or accidents in the house
- Unusual lumps, bumps or swellings
- Bad breath or excessive drooling

If you are concerned that your dog may have a fever, you can take its temperature with a thermometer in the rectum. The normal temperature for a dog is 99.5° to 102.5° Fahrenheit. If your dog's temperature is above or below this range, contact your veterinarian.

What Should I Do If I Suspect That My Dog Is Ill?

If your dog shows signs of illness, don't wait—call your veterinarian at once. If it is after your veterinarian's normal business hours, contact an emergency veterinary clinic. It is very important to locate a veterinary emergency and referral hospital before you need one so that if you have an emergency and your veterinarian is closed, you will know where to take your dog for evaluation. Some illnesses may require immediate veterinary attention, so when you call, it's important to ask if your pet needs to be evaluated right away.

Any change in your dog's normal behavior, such as increased lethargy, loss of appetite, or weight loss, may indicate that your dog is ill.

If your pet has recently experienced any kind of trauma—for example, being hit by a car or attacked by another dog—but does not appear to be injured, you should still call your veterinarian. An examination may be necessary to detect any internal injuries that are not immediately obvious.