

Canine Parvovirus

- Canine parvovirus is a highly contagious, serious disease with a mortality (death) rate of over 90% in untreated dogs.
- Canine parvovirus attacks the gastrointestinal tract and immune system of puppies and dogs.
- Canine parvovirus is spread by direct contact with other dogs or infected materials, such as feces, soil, and food dishes.
- There is no effective treatment other than supportive care, but disease can be prevented through vaccination.
- Every dog should be vaccinated against canine parvovirus.

What Is It?

Canine parvovirus is a deadly disease that is caused by the canine parvovirus type 2 (CPV-2) virus. The virus attacks the gastrointestinal tract and immune system of puppies and dogs. It can also attack the heart of very young puppies.

CPV-2 is highly contagious and is spread through direct contact with other infected dogs or with infected feces. It is easily carried on hands, food dishes, leashes, shoes, etc. The virus is very stable in the environment and can survive for over a year in feces and soil through extremes of heat, cold, drought, or humidity. While up to 85% to 90% of treated dogs survive, the disease requires extensive supportive patient care and can be expensive to treat. In untreated dogs, the mortality rate can exceed 90%.

Signs of Infection With CPV-2

- Lethargy (tiredness)
- Loss of appetite
- Fever
- Vomiting
- Severe diarrhea (often bloody)

Affected dogs often suffer from vomiting and diarrhea and can become extremely dehydrated. In acute cases, death can occur in 2 to 3 days.

Diagnosis and Treatment

Diagnosis is made based on history, signs of disease, physical examination, and laboratory tests performed on blood and feces. There is no effective treatment for CPV-2 other than supportive care, which consists of fluid therapy, medications to control vomiting and diarrhea, and prevention of secondary infections.

Prevention

Because of the prevalence of the disease and its severity, the CPV-2 vaccine is considered a core (essential) vaccine by organized veterinary medicine, meaning that all dogs should be protected from this disease. Vaccination is the most effective way to prevent disease associated with CPV-2 infection. The CPV-2 vaccine is typically given in a combination vaccine that also protects against other serious diseases, such as canine distemper and canine adenovirus-2.

Your veterinarian will give you the vaccination schedule for your dog, but in general, all puppies should receive the CPV-2 vaccine every 3 to 4 weeks between 6 and 16 weeks of age, followed by a booster 1 year after the last dose. Thereafter, booster vaccinations are generally administered every 1 to 3 years.

Infected dogs should be kept isolated from other dogs until they have recovered and are no longer shedding (spreading) virus. The environment, bowls, etc. should be disinfected with a dilute bleach solution.

Keep puppies away from other dogs at dog parks, groomers, and pet stores until the puppy vaccination series has been completed.