



Top 10 canine health conditions

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Nationwide receives more than 1 million pet insurance claims each year. The following were the most frequently occurring medical conditions that prompted veterinary visits for dogs. While the conditions sometimes change rank, the same conditions have been in the Top 10 for more than 10 years.

#1 Skin allergies (atopic or allergic dermatitis)

Allergies to normally harmless environmental factors like grass, mold spores or dust mites can lead to painful chronic skin disease that is very uncomfortable for dogs. Some pets will also experience an allergic response to medication, food or household cleaners and detergents.

Usually a life-long condition, signs of skin allergies include excessive scratching and licking, rashes, sneezing, watery eyes, paw chewing and inflammation.

#2 Ear infection (otitis externa)

Inflammation in the outer ear canal can have many causes, including ear mites or everyday bacteria and yeast. Ear infections can also be caused by underlying skin allergies, which are the #1 most common claim. Dogs who like to swim may develop swimmer's ear, when water trapped inside the ear canal leads to painful bacterial growth.

Common signs of ear infection include persistent rubbing or scratching at the ears, head shaking or tilt, an abnormal odor or discharge from the ear or pain when the ear is touched.

#3 Diarrhea (enteropathy)

Most dogs will experience loose, watery stool at some point in their lives. Diarrhea can be caused by many things, including rapid changes to a dog's diet, food allergies or toxic ingestion. Occasionally, diarrhea will result from a bacterial, viral or parasitic infection. Dogs commonly experience diarrhea when they ingest rich, fatty or spoiled human leftovers.

However, diarrhea can also be a sign of serious illness, and you should consult with your veterinarian to determine the cause and correct care for your pet.


#4 Vomiting (gastropathy)

Vomiting can have many causes. Short-term episodes are often the result of eating spoiled or raw food, foreign objects, toxic plants, garbage or other unhealthy substances. Chronic vomiting (anything lasting more than a few days) can be caused by serious underlying health conditions.

Clinical signs can vary but may include drooling and decreased appetite, lethargy, increased thirst, sensitivity on the belly or dehydration.

#5 Skin infection (pyoderma)

Skin infections are common for dogs and can have many causes, including fleas, ticks, skin allergies, hormonal imbalances or yeast growing between folds of skin. Common clinical signs of pyoderma include pustules on the skin—which are often red and raised like pimples in humans—as well as patchy hair loss, flaky skin or musty odors. Itchy, raw spots caused by pyoderma can be very uncomfortable for dogs and may lead to more serious infection if left untreated.



Many common conditions can be a sign of a more serious illness, so it's important to consult with your veterinarian to determine the cause and correct care for your dog.

#6 Anal gland blockage (anal gland sacculitis)

Anal gland obstructions prevent bacteria and fluid normally expelled during a bowel movement to accumulate and sometimes develop into an infection. A common condition in dogs, the first sign of backed-up anal gland sacs is often scooting or dragging the rear end on the carpet or grass, followed by excessive licking or biting at the base of the tail. Many dogs will need regular treatment to manually express the anal gland and prevent infection.

#7 Arthritis (osteoarthritis or OA)

Arthritis, or painful joint inflammation, is a common condition associated with age, obesity, past injury and genetics. Dogs with arthritis experience discomfort when walking, getting up or down or climbing up and down steps. Other early signs of arthritis include stiffness, lameness in one or more legs, and reluctance to be pet on affected areas.

#8 Skin mass or tumor (benign neoplasia)

Non-cancerous tumors can be very scary for dog parents, and they're quite common. Benign (non-cancerous) tumors include lipomas (i.e. fatty tumors) and sebaceous adenomas, which can develop anywhere on the body.

Most non-cancerous skin masses and tumors are discovered when an abnormal lump is found on or under the skin. Of course, there's no way to know if a tumor is cancerous by feeling or looking at it, so it's best to regularly check your pet for abnormal growths and consult a veterinarian if you discover any changes to your pet's skin or coat.

#9 Bladder inflammation (cystitis)

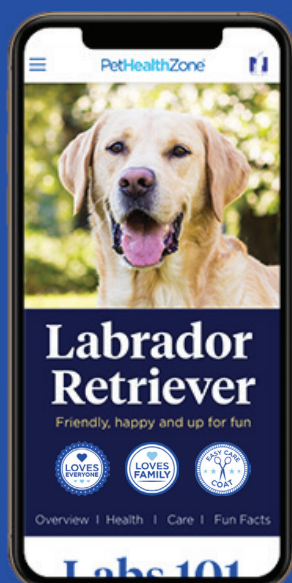
The most common cause of cystitis is a bacterial infection, but other causes like bladder stones, polyps, and tumors can also be to blame. Cystitis is usually discovered when blood is found in a dog's urine.

When dogs have bladder inflammation, they may have difficulty urinating or urinate more frequently than usual, often producing only a small amount of urine.

#10 Dental disease (periodontitis)

Tooth and gum disease is very common for both dogs and cats. Most pets exhibit signs of gum disease by their 3rd birthday, which over time can lead to bad breath, loose or discolored teeth and eventually tooth loss. Common signs of early dental disease include foul mouth odor, abnormal chewing or excessive drooling, loss of appetite or dropping food while eating (an indicator of pain).

Signs of tooth and gum disease shouldn't be ignored. Left untreated, dental disease can be extremely painful for dogs, and may lead to other health problems, including damage to the liver, heart and kidneys. Fortunately, preventive measures like regular teeth cleaning at the veterinarian can help prevent serious dental disease.



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