

Bloat (GDV): Recognising the Signs

Family Matters

There are many emergencies that require urgent treatment.

Bloat (Gastric Dilatation and Volvulus, or GDV) is one of the few where **every minute truly counts**.

A dog that appears perfectly well can become critically ill within a matter of hours.

At Amity, we believe that recognising the signs of GDV early can save lives. Our purpose is to **Empower You Through Education**, helping you know when to act immediately.

What Is GDV?

GDV occurs when the stomach fills with gas and then twists on itself.

The twist traps the gas inside, causing the stomach to become larger and larger.

As it expands, it compresses major blood vessels, reducing blood flow back to the heart and cutting off the stomach's own blood supply.

Without emergency treatment, GDV is often fatal.

Which Dogs Are Most at Risk?

Although any dog can develop GDV, it is more common in:

- Great Danes.
- German Shepherds.
- Standard Poodles.
- Irish Setters.
- Weimaraners.
- Dobermanns.
- Other large, deep-chested breeds.

The risk also increases with age.

What Are the Signs?

The classic signs include:

- Trying to vomit but bringing nothing up.
- Repeated retching.
- A swollen or tight abdomen.

- Restlessness.
- Pacing.
- Drooling.
- Rapid breathing.
- Pale gums.
- Weakness.
- Collapse.

One of the earliest signs is often a dog that simply **cannot get comfortable**.

They may repeatedly lie down, get back up and pace around the room.

Don't Wait for the Abdomen to Swell

Many people expect the abdomen to become obviously enlarged.

Sometimes it does.

Sometimes it doesn't.

The absence of a visibly swollen abdomen **does not rule out GDV**.

If your dog is repeatedly trying to vomit without producing anything, treat it as an emergency.

What Should I Do?

Don't offer food or water.

Don't encourage your dog to walk.

Contact your veterinary practice **immediately** and tell them you are concerned about GDV.

This allows the team to prepare for your arrival while you travel.

Every minute matters.

What Will the Vet Do?

The first priority is stabilising your dog.

Treatment may include:

- Intravenous fluids.
- Pain relief.
- Blood tests.
- X-rays to confirm the diagnosis.

- Decompressing the stomach to relieve pressure.
- Emergency surgery to untwist the stomach.
- Stitching the stomach to the body wall (**gastropexy**) to reduce the risk of it happening again.

Even after successful surgery, intensive monitoring is often required.

Can GDV Be Prevented?

Unfortunately, GDV cannot always be prevented.

However, the risk may be reduced by:

- Feeding two or more smaller meals each day.
- Avoiding vigorous exercise immediately before and after meals.
- Preventing dogs from gulping large meals quickly.
- Considering a preventative gastropexy in breeds known to be at particularly high risk.

We'll be happy to discuss whether this is appropriate for your dog.

Recognise It. React Quickly.

GDV is one of the true veterinary emergencies.

The earlier treatment begins, the better the chance of survival.

At Amity, we'd much rather assess a dog that turns out not to have GDV than have someone delay because they hoped the signs would pass.

When your dog repeatedly tries to vomit and nothing comes up, don't wait.

Act immediately.

Because every minute counts.

Because they're not just your dog.

They're family.

Family Matters.

If you need more information, book an appointment with an Amity vet. We're here to Empower You Through Education and help you become your pet's greatest advocate.