

Information from your veterinarian

Keeping an eye on your pet's heart

Your pet's age and breed may influence his or her risk for developing heart disease, so discuss risk factors with your veterinarian. You can help safeguard your pet's health by watching for changes in behavior.



SIGNS

Your pet may show no sign of heart problems, or you may notice some of the following:

- Coughing
- Changes in breathing
 - Difficulty breathing
 - Shortness of breath
 - Labored breathing
 - Rapid or fast breathing
- Changes in behavior (more noticeable in dogs)
 - Tiring easily
 - Reluctance to exercise or not wanting to go for walks
 - Less playfulness
 - Slowing down or lack of energy
 - Depression or a withdrawn demeanor
- Poor appetite
- Weight loss
- Fainting or collapsing (less common)
- Weakness
- Restlessness, especially at night
- Swollen abdomen

Don't assume your pet's behavior is simply a sign of aging. Contact your veterinarian immediately if you notice any of the above.

DIAGNOSIS

Your veterinarian will examine your pet thoroughly to detect problems. He or she will use a stethoscope to measure and evaluate your pet's heart rate and rhythm and listen for signs of a heart murmur. Your veterinarian may also use additional diagnostic tests, such as a blood test, radiographs, a blood pressure test, an electrocardiograph (interpreting the heart's electrical activity), and an echocardiogram (using cardiac ultrasound to view the heart and blood flow).

TREATMENT

Treating your pet's heart condition will depend on the type of disease and how far the disease has progressed. Your veterinarian will recommend a plan based on your pet's individual needs and prognosis. This may include medications, such as diuretics, ACE inhibitors, and inodilators; regular veterinary check-ups; and diet and lifestyle changes.

Discuss your concerns with your veterinarian, and be sure to notify him or her of any changes in your pet's health or behavior.

Information adapted from yourdogsheart.com